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"Web Banners on Russian Political Websites as Elements of Discourse"

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ABSTRACT

The thesis aims at including banner ads into contemporary studies in Russian and Slavic applied linguistics and discourse analysis. Careful consideration suggests that it is necessary to not only analyze banner ads as technical and graphical units promoting a certain product, but also to reveal their discursive and social functions. The present study attempts to define the multi-faceted nature of banner ads, proposes their classification, and provides suggestions for further steps in the construction of a more comprehensive approach to this phenomenon. Data collected in May, June, and July of 2007 was analyzed at three levels: content, form, and co-text. Banners were then analyzed in terms of their topics, semantic fields, shape, and credibility. Political news was shown to be frequently presented in fusion and interplay with elements of entertainment and crime, which may be an efficient technique for attracting viewership.

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CHAPTER 1: PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes the inclusion of web banners into the studies of modern Russian political discourse. The phenomenon of web banner advertising appears to have been previously reviewed mainly in such fields as computer science and marketing, but is only marginally included into studies in discourse, political and social sciences. However, careful consideration suggests that web banners are not only a mode of "netvertising", but also elements of discourse, dialogue of people, cultures, and ideas. It is necessary to not only analyze banner ads as technical and graphical units on a web page promoting a certain product, but also to reveal their discursive and social functions.

The Internet is rapidly spreading in Russia and more Russians rely on it for information with each passing year, turning the Russian Web ("RuNet") into an important communication arena. Russia is now in an election year: December 2007 will see State Duma elections, while the election of the country's third President will take place in spring 2008. Political parties and candidates are already making themselves known to and heard by the public, and they use the Internet to an ever greater extent in their work.

The present study analyzes web banner characteristics, accounts for their efficiency, and discloses the means employed by banner creators. It attempts to define the multi-faceted nature of banner ads, proposes a classification of banners in relation to a variety of factors, and provides a number of suggestions for further steps in the construction of a more comprehensive approach to this phenomenon.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The multitude and versatility of web banners today make it difficult to believe that the first banner ad was recorded only in 1994 (Janoschka 2004: 54). As Hanson (2000: 134) notes, this banner was only the beginning of a large segment of advertising, which now incorporates whole companies working with this medium only. By 2002, the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) reported that banners accounted for almost 55% of all advertising on the World Wide Web (Gangopadhyay 2002: 116).

Despite their apparent importance, web banners remain understudied, and several of their relevant aspects have not been an object of critical review. More specifically, banners have been approached mostly in reference to their commercial efficiency and "making a sale" (Cook 2001: 32). The "inherent measurability" (Hanson 2000: 135) of online advertising has produced such notions as "click through ratio (CTR)", "click-to-buy ratio (CTB)", and "click-to-interest (CTI)", used throughout the major works in the field (Hanson 2000; Lee and Sundar 2006; Janoschka 2004; Adams 2003). These purely technical criteria have been and still are regarded as tools for establishing the potency of an individual banner or an entire banner campaign, with only marginal opposition from a small group of scholars who urge the establishment of new ways of looking at online advertising efficiency (Bergfeld 2006).

In connection to the pre-occupancy of most studies on web advertising with efficiency, current approaches to web banner audience are unwarrantably limited, regarding web page visitors exclusively as potential buyers and consumers. The scholars that have looked at banner ads from this standpoint invariably stress the need for "the investigation of the attention-attracting role of image attributes such as vividness, entertainment, innovativeness, and ease of processing to determine not only what pulls consumers in, but also what drives them away" (Stafford and Faber 2005: 46). A frequently mentioned notion of the commonality of the various forms of online advertising underlines that they "share the common characteristic that the consumer must initiate some action to be exposed to the communication" (Stafford and Faber 2005: 177).

Manchanda and others (2006) and Cho (2003) operate with the concepts of "purchase" and "product" throughout their studies on web advertising viewer behaviour. The same commercialist, consumerist approach is found in studies on online advertising dealing with audience perception and attitude (Okazaki 2007; Lee and Sundar 2006), personalization and ethics (Kazienko and Adamski 2007; Palmer 2005), cognitive and emotional responses

and attention (Wang and Day 2005), and comparison to other media (Nysveen and Brevik 2005). It is also seen in a number of Russian sources (Godin and Godin 2006; Golik and Tolkachev; Bokarev 2000).

Concentrated on the marketing and promotion aspect, the viewpoint described above unjustifiably excludes web site visitors engaged in casual browsing of web site content, conducting searches for specific information or carrying out research, either discarding such cases or underlining the possibility that such activities may also lead to sales and brand awareness, although indirectly.

Existing literature also presents a strictly delimited image of web advertising creators as businesses. In this respect, a number of studies appeared to have been guided by cooperation between science and entrepreneurship, in which the former provides advice on how Internet advertising could be improved. To give an example, Okazaki (2007) suggests that "the operators and the content providers should pay more attention to motivational aspects, in order to achieve stronger commitment by users" (Okazaki 2007: 1715). Kazienko and Adamski (2007) propose "a complex, coherent personalization framework that can satisfy both users and advertisers" (Kazienko and Adamski: 2293).

Approaches outlined above that assign paramount importance to the role of online advertising in raising sales and increasing product or brand awareness do not presuppose a vast array of possible web banner functions. Such functions as increasing social involvement, providing information, changing and influencing opinions, and enlarging the web site viewership base fall outside of the scope of their interests. Meanwhile, a number of scholars in the area of political communication have stressed the need for a broader view of the Internet as an important factor of social and political change. Alexander and Pal (1998) stress the profound shifts taking place in the American and Canadian societies in which computers and the Internet play an important role. Jamieson and Campbell (2006) and Agre (2002) reflect the growth of influence of non-traditional advertising, including banners. These findings are yet to be fully incorporated into online advertising analysis.

While Semetko and Krasnoboka (2003) note "the importance of sources of information not only for citizens but also for the building of democratic institutions in societies in transition" (Semetko and Krasnoboka 2003: 80), the role of the Internet in the social and political transformation of post-Soviet states is only now becoming a topic of special study. Alexander (2004), Ellis (1999), Rohozinski (1999) give an overview of the interplay of these changes and technological advancement in Russia in the past 20 years.

Semenov (2002), in a publication that appeared one and a half years after Vladimir Putin's coming to power, notes the growth in state control and state interest in the Internet and the general slumber of independent projects.

Another issue that has so far been approached only sparingly is that of banner subject-matter. Lohtia and others (2003) analyze it through the prism of click-through rates and the difference between business-to-business and business-to-consumer advertising. Lee and Pashupati (2003) suggest that topical distribution varies greatly from one national Internet space to another. Notably, both of these studies consider only commercial advertising, i.e. ads of companies and products. However, the ongoing development of the non-commercial and not-for-profit segments of the World Wide Web suggests an infinite number of other possible web banner topics, such as contemporary events, entertainment, political ideology, sports, social problems and development. Until now, all of these have found only casual reflection in academic work on web banners and online advertising as a whole.

The urgent need of expanding studies on online advertising and of establishing strong ties between different fields suggests for banners to be analyzed in the light of notions of advertising manipulation, exaggerated advertising claims and false advertising, which have been previously applied to traditional media. The findings by Cowley (2006) on the material of print ads point out that "exposure to incorrect information affects beliefs even when it is identified as lacking credibility" (Cowley 2006: 733). Misleading messages in banners may thus be initially stored in memory as being true, and even later on, when the "knowledge that the claim is lacking credibility is stored, remnants of the claim's persuasive impact linger" (Cowley 2006: 733).

Including Internet advertising and specifically web banners into studies on manipulation will possibly shed more light on the ability and efficiency of advertising in forming opinions throughout the world. Cowley (2006) stresses that advertising is manipulative in nature and, moreover, quite successful in achieving its aims through unfair practices, in which "puffery works, [and] a legally accepted, but misleading claim, results in consumers liking the brand better and not remembering the exaggeration specifically" (Cowley 2006: 733). Phillips (1997), on the other hand, claims that "advertising almost certainly does not manipulate as well as its critics believe" (Phillips 1997: vii), going so far as to ask "assuming that it works, why is manipulative advertising wrong?" (Phillips 1997: 2)

A very limited number of studies that treat banner advertising from the point of view of language and discourse can be found. A major work on language and the Internet by Crystal (2006) gives only a passing mention of netvertising. Janoschka (2004), on the other hand, devotes a separate chapter to linguistic persuasion employed in web ads and relates to the language aspect and the prioritization of language and graphics when giving a general technical classification of banners. It is Janoschka's opinion that "the attractiveness and effectiveness of web ads depend on the simplicity of linguistic content and the selection of words and phrases with which they captivate and motivate their audience" (Janoschka 2004: 52). It is deemed necessary to continue and expand this approach to banners, which would reveal the role web banners have come to play in human communication over the past thirteen years.

It would be important to stop treating banner ads as self-sufficient units in isolation from their context and co-text. No special investigations into the information-linking nature of web banners are to be found to date. Meanwhile, it is necessary to review banners from the point of view of source confusion theories (Yegiyan and Grabe 2007). Namely, the aggressiveness and omnipresence of banners suggests that viewers may, after a certain period, "remember" obtaining certain information from the materials on the Internet page, while they have in reality obtained it from the banner ads.

To recapitulate, the further spread of the Internet and the growing number of people relying upon this medium as the source for news and information suggest that online advertising and web banners in particular need to be studied critically to establish the extent of their potential socio-political influence. Despite the high number of existing studies on web banners, this phenomenon remains insufficiently represented and analyzed. More specifically, current approaches to web banner audience, makers, subject-matter, efficiency, and functions appear to be limited.

For reasons outlined above, it is necessary to expand the study of banners beyond the fields of commerce and marketing and include them into studies of computer influence onto social and political transformation, cognitive and psychological processes, issues of trust and manipulation. Toward this end, it is essential to treat banners within their context and together with their co-texts, to initiate the analysis of their linguistic and discursive nature, their role in communication between people, groups, and ideologies.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The available data on the increasing involvement of the Internet in forming opinions of Russians suggests that the online medium will play an important role during the upcoming 2007-2008 election cycle in the country. The spread and versatility of web banners suggest that their socio-political influence cannot be neglected and they need to be thoroughly analyzed from a number of viewpoints.

Within the confines of one research project it is not possible to take the much-needed steps in all the mentioned directions. This investigation concentrates on revealing the discursive nature of a specific class of banners on one national segment of the Internet, the Russian political web banners. The following research questions are addressed:

1) What discursive functions do Russian political banner ads have?

2) Through the interplay of what means do they serve these functions?

The project establishes a web banner classification beyond the existing review of commercial banners. It then goes on to observe the general semantic fields present in web banners and the scope of topics upon which they touch. These preliminary steps serve as a foundation to the investigation into the features and functions of web banners as well as the interplay of verbal and visual components in them. The thesis thus aims at including banner ads into contemporary studies in the field of applied linguistics and discourse analysis.

1.4 CORPUS

The top ten political websites in Russian, as determined by the available site popularity listings (Rambler 2007), were singled out for the project. It should be noted that one of them (www.zadonbass.org) is based not in Russia, but in Ukraine. It was nevertheless included in the analysis as, according to Rambler (2007), it is among the top three political websites in Russian accessed by Russian Internet users. Throughout the thesis, "Russian websites" and "Russian banners" does not necessarily imply the websites and banner ads produced in or based in Russia, but those accessed by users from Russia. All of the analysed websites are in Russian.

Already during the first day of data collection, three of the websites originally planned for analysis were discarded for technical reasons (repeated virus danger to the researcher's computer while saving files from the websites, automatic reload of the website content every minute, which made it impossible to collect data). The remaining seven websites, Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal (Daily Journal - ej.ru), Grani (Edges - grani.ru), Polit.Ru (polit.ru), SMI (Media - smi.ru), KID (zadonbass.org), Vzgliad (Opinion - vz.ru), and Vremia Novostei (Time for News - vremya.ru), (see Appendix A for further details) were studied during the first week of three consecutive months (May through July 2007).

The analyzed pages were entered into a database employing Microsoft Excel 2002 software, together with the pages directly linked to them through web banners. The political web banners (the total number of their occurrences amounting to 244 in an overall corpus of 720 banner occurrences) and the context in which they were found were then singled out in the database and now constitute the general data corpus. A restricted corpus made up of banners with class fusion and interplay in them was later singled out of the general corpus.

1.5 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

A web banner is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It is a complex element of discourse that is a text in itself and a part of another text (the web page), a technical unit on an Internet page, as well as a manifest link between two web pages, serving as a co-text of these two pages in this respect. It is thus possible to study web banners at four distinct levels:

- text, in which interplay of the visual and textual aspects within the confines of the banner would be studied;
- co-text, in which it would be necessary to view the banner as an inextricable part of a three-text unit (origin page – banner – destination page);
- context, in which such factors as other texts on the topic, level of technological advancement of the web resource, etc. would need to be taken into account;
- discourse, of which the banner is a part, together with its co-texts, the context, the people engaged in the production of the Internet page and its viewers.

Taking these levels of analysis into account, the four major aspects of web banners that need to be reviewed are their content and form that are related to level of text, co-text, and context.

An ideal study incorporating all of these aspects would consider banners at all the mentioned dimensions to establish the extent of their interdependence. A longitudinal experiment on the materials of several websites spanning over a period of several months would permit for generalizations regarding banner form, content, and technical characteristics. At the co-text level, the study would entail analysis of the banner within the triangle origin-banner-destination to approach the question of how deliberate or random the links between the three parts are. The context level analysis would demand the review of a vast number of other texts on the same topic as the found origin, banner, and destination, as well as a detailed technological survey of the Internet segment under scrutiny. Incorporation of an experiment on web banner viewers would be necessary to conduct the analysis at the dimension of discourse.

As the present study recognizes banner ads as linguistic, contextual, and discursive elements, unlike earlier works on the topic, it does not have the necessary basis of well-established projects to conduct the experiments needed to fully analyze the context and discourse dimensions of banners. The practical reasons of limited technical resources and

time have demanded that this project concentrate on the three dimensions, the initial analysis of which would allow for more comprehensive approaches to follow. These dimensions are content, form, and co-text. This initial analysis of their interplay in web banners will allow me to approach the answers to the research questions of the current project without making it too complex and detached in its methodology from existing studies on other media. As banner ads have not been studied in this respect previously, it is considered necessary to initially deal with the issues that are common to banners and the discursive elements that have already come under critical review.

In this project, the review of the content aspect (see Section 1.5.1) incorporates the general classification of banners into political, entertainment, social, commercial, sports, crime, and other. The question of cases with features of several classes is reviewed separately. This analysis also includes the exposure of major topics and semantic fields present among the collected banners, and the variation of means employed to transmit different messages. The quantitative data on the seven analyzed websites is then compared in regards to the presence of political and non-political banners on them.

The aspect of form (see Section 1.5.2) is looked at through the prism of such factors as banner shape and technical characteristics (adopted from Janoschka 2004: 48-62), sentence structure, and the correlation of the image and the text within the banners. This analysis is based on the model proposed for print media by Kress and van Leeuwen (1998).

The third aspect, co-text (see Section 1.5.3), is concerned with the presence or absence of an interconnection between the origin and the destination page through the banner, which permits us to observe the discursive functions served by the banner ads. A co-text lies around, before or after a text and provides elements for understanding it (Pimentel and others 2003). Each banner is essentially a co-text of the destination and the origin, serving its basic function of information linking. The units of linked information "not only have cumulative but also cognitive value", they "link information in terms of such cognitive categories as causal or temporal relationships, and it is these categories that make items of information meaningful in relation to each other" (van Leeuwen 2005: 219).

1.5.1 CONTENT

This section presents how the main data corpus was defined, and how the topical and semantic aspects of political web banners were analyzed.

1.5.1.1 General Classification

A general classification entails the division of banners into seven categories: political, entertainment, social, commercial, sports, crime, and other. The categories are established as follows:

Political – banners mentioning the names of politicians, political journalists, analysts, and newsmakers, political parties and groups, nations, ideologies, official titles and posts, government offices, events in domestic and foreign politics, political media or incorporating the photographs or other representations of same. Some examples of this class would be:

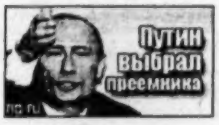


Figure 1: *Putin has chosen a successor / ng.ru*

Depiction of Russian President Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: http://www.vremya.ru/

Figure 2: *The hottest news item of the hour / Expert*

Depiction of President of Belarus Lukashenka

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/summary/entry/6938/

Figure 3: *Sex and sensuality in the State Duma: Details / spbjournal.ru*

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/

Entertainment – banners mentioning the names of actors, singers, popular writers, musicians, celebrities, other personae in the field of entertainment, TV and radio shows and

stations, entertainment tabloids, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, discussion of sex, fashion, beauty, music, humour, private life, UFOs, astrology, flirt, leisure, nudity or incorporating images of same. For example:

Figure 4: *Tragedy at the filming / rutv.ru*

Depiction of actress Charlize Theron

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: http://www.smi.ru/politics/

Figure 5: *2 TV: The first* (channel) *for the youth*

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/

Figure 6: *Aliens have visited Earth 400 times / lenta.ru*

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

Social – banners discussing and advocating charity, home and family values, health, education, non-fiction and well-established literature, social achievements, employment, directions, transit schedules or incorporating images of same. Some examples are:

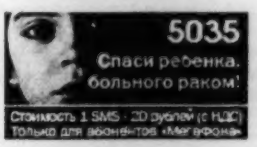


Figure 7: *5035 / Save a child sick with cancer! / Cost of 1 SMS – 20 rubles (with VAT) / Only for subscribers of "Megaphone"*

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

Figure 8: *Maps of cities and regions of Ukraine / Kiev*

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: zadonbass.org

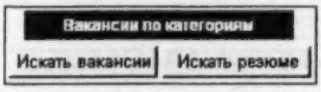


Figure 9: *Vacancies by categories / Search for vacancies / search for resumes*

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: zadonbass.org

Commercial – banners promoting features and sales of products or services, making money, national and international trade or incorporating images of same. For example:

Figure 10: *Adru.net / We are inviting to the new banner network*

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

Figure 11: *Auto.ria.ua / $ 1000*

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: zadonbass.org

Figure 12: *Your phone at Mobiset.ru*

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.122929.html

Sports – banners mentioning the names of athletes, sports authorities, teams and leagues, sports types, competitions or incorporating images of same. Examples are:

Figure 13: *Urgent! / The sportiest news item of the day / Chempionat.ru*

Date accessed: 6th of May, 2007

Origin: http://www.vz.ru/top/

Figure 14: *Ronaldinio does not pay for anything / rtr-sport.ru*

Date accessed: 4th of May, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru/politics/

Figure 15: *Japan is amazed by the "second Sharapova" (photo) / newsru.com*

Date accessed: 6th of May, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

Crime – banners mentioning the names of criminals or criminal groups, discussing crimes, crime scenes, criminality or incorporating images of same. For instance:

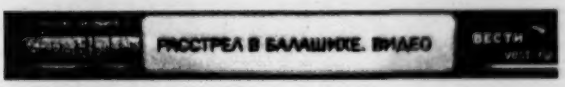


Figure 16: *Fusillade in Balashikha. Video / Vesti / vesti.ru*

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru

Figure 17: *Missing 4-year-old Nastia found stabbed / newsru.com*

Date accessed: May 7th, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.121652.html

Figure 18: *Fight at a Moscow college / Video / ng.ru*

Date accessed: June 5th, 2007

Origin: http://www.vremya.ru/2007/95/5/179570.html

Other – all banners not fitting into any of the above categories, such as those mentioning only the name of the advertising website, discussing general news which cannot be classified as political, entertainment or sports, noting general issues of science, environment, technology or incorporating images of same. Some examples are:

Figure 19: *Around the World / Hermaphrodism – the cause of intellect*

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

Figure 20: *In the middle of the 21st century the Arctic will melt / svobodanews.ru*

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: http://www.vremya.ru/2007/76/4/

Figure 21: *CenterAsia*

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.121428.html

In accordance with the present research topic, the entire data corpus is analyzed only within the general classification outlined above. Having singled out the political banners from the corpus, I then proceeded to conducting the study of this group only.

1.5.1.1.1 General Class Overlaps

It should be noted that cases transgressing the boundaries of these classes are certainly present in the data corpus. To deal with them, a hierarchy of the classes, corresponding to the order presented above, is adopted. Therefore, for example, a banner having both political and entertainment features (e.g. Fig. 22, depicting a famous Russian singer at Boris Yeltsin's funeral, accompanied with the corresponding verbal message) is classified as a political banner. The hierarchy is structured in this way due to political banners being the main object under study in this project.

Figure 22: *Expert online / www.expert.ru / Report from Yeltsin's funeral (24 photos)*

Depiction of Russian singer Pugacheva

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

On the basis of initial analysis carried out on this project's data, it is possible to observe several class overlaps between political and entertainment (e.g. Fig. 22, 33, 43) and political and crime (e.g. Fig. 24, 31). Overlaps between other classes are also found, but are not considered in detail, as they fall outside of this project's scope. Class overlaps considered in this project appear in such a way that there is a link between the elements falling under different classes, i.e. these elements together build up the message of the banner.

For example, the banner in Fig. 22 above depicts Alla Pugacheva, a famous Russian singer, at Boris Yeltsin's funeral. The textual message does not mention Pugacheva's name, but instead serves as a comment to the image specifying when and where the picture was taken. Together, the two elements participate in the construction of the banner's message that through clicking it the viewer will be able to see the photos of celebrities taken at Yeltsin's funeral (it should be noted that the banner did not even lead to an article related to the funeral when clicked). This issue will be touched upon in more detail in the Discussion section below (Section 2.4).

1.5.1.1.2 Multi-Banners

Multi-banners, similar to that in Fig. 23, constitute a different phenomenon revealed during the study.

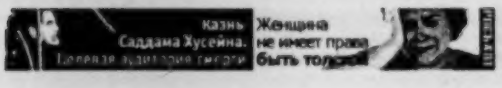


Figure 23: *Execution of Saddam Hussein. Target group of death / A woman does not have the right to be fat / Rosbalt*

Depiction of Saddam Hussein and an unidentified individual.

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: http://www.smi.ru/politics/

These banners are in essence two or more separate banners merged together horizontally or vertically, and sometimes put under a common header with the name of the advertised website, as seen in Fig. 27 and 39 below. The separate banners combined in this way belong to different general classes. Thus the multi-banners are broken up into the individual components to reflect this distinction.

Multi-banners are different from individual banners that have class overlap in them. This difference lies in the fact that no connection was observed between the banners merged into multi-banners. No such link is observed in Fig. 23 above, in Fig. 27, 39 or in any other multi-banner collected during the study. Multi-banners may be built up automatically from separate banners in a specific banner network database using a template. However, this is not possible to verify. Within this project only basic preliminary analysis of multi-banners is possible due to corpus and time constraints. The data specifically for multi-banners is given in Section 2.1.4.1.4.

1.5.1.1.3 Quantitative Analysis of the Content Aspect

The advertising websites and the advertisers are also reviewed quantitatively. Each of the seven websites under analysis is ranked in the number of political banners and banners of other classes. The advertisers are ranked by the number of occurrences of their web banners within the data corpus. To account for the significance of the numerical data, T-tests are used. A T-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. The significance value is established at $p \leq 0.05$.

1.5.1.2 Topical Diffusion

The analysis of the subject-matter in the data corpus is twofold. Viewing the web banners as a complex combination of text and image, I study the topical diffusion in both the textual and the visual aspects. The study of subject matter begins with a content analysis of the banner texts, during which recurrent topics are singled out. This provides the basis for the review of topical diffusion. The semantic fields of the found topics are then expanded to include the context, so that, to take an example, "president" in one case is determined as "Putin" and in another case as "Yeltsin". Topics that are less recurrent are then grouped into macro-topics (e.g. multiple single banners about different Russian politicians are grouped into the "Other Russian politicians" category, as opposed to the Russian politicians that rank high individually in mentions in the banners).

The visual aspect of the banners is then reviewed by the already established topical categories. For example, the verbal side of the Pugacheva banner given in Fig. 22 is coded as mentioning the topic of "Boris Yeltsin", while the visual aspect is coded as mentioning the topic of "Other Russians – Entertainment". The resulting data permits us to see that some topics are dealt with visually more than verbally and vice versa, as will be discussed further in this study.

1.5.1.3 Semantic Fields

The data corpus is analyzed with respect to semantic fields in order to establish emotions or interests of the viewers to which the creators of web banners appeal. The fields, which certainly overlap in some of the banners, are established as follows:

1) *Secret / intrigue / scandal*: all banners referring to improper behaviour, outrage, secrecy, new compelling evidence or facts coming to light. Some keywords for this category would be "details", "version", "revelation", "secret", "plot", "scandal", "hot news". Some examples of banners falling into this semantic field would be the following and also Fig. 1, 2, 3, 38:

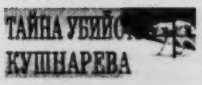


Figure 24: *The secret of Kushnarev's murder*[1]

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.zadonbass.org

Figure 25: *Grani / Budanov has disappeared without a trace*

Depiction of convicted Colonel Budanov

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.polit.ru

2) *Violence / conflict:* Web banners referring to war, aggression, aiming at destruction, conspiracy against someone, weapons and military technology, blackmail, victory, defeat, animosity, and seeking shelter, such as the following and also Fig. 36, 42, 44:

Figure 26: *Grani / Kadyrov's people captured Kislovodsk*

Depiction of Ramzan Kadyrov, President of Chechnya

Date accessed: May 5th, 2007

Origin: www.polit.ru/event/2007/05/04/hundredtime.html

Figure 27:

Newsru.co.il

Olmert's approval rating has nowhere to fall. Poll results

Depiction of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

Sermon of the Hamas speaker: "America and Israel will be destroyed"

Depiction of Palestinian parliament speaker Abdel Aziz Dweik

Former CIA chief: "I did not allow Pollard to be released"

Depiction of Israeli intelligence agent Jonathan Pollard

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

[1] Notably, this banner, depicting a targeted wolf, led to an article entitled "He was killed like a wolf".

3) *Reference to speech:* Banners giving or referring to statements or official texts and voiced opinions, such as the following and also Fig. 27, 37, 43:

Figure 28: *Newsru.com / Winged phrases of Boris Yeltsin*

Depiction of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

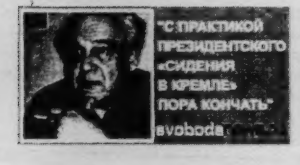


Figure 29: *It is time to end the practice of presidential "sitting in the Kremlin" / svobodanews.ru*

Depiction of dissident Vladimir Bukovsky

Date accessed: June 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

4) *Tragedy / death:* Banners depicting or referring to murder, death and dying, funeral, execution, and bereavement, such as the following and also Fig. 22, 23, 24, 38:

Figure 30: *Boris Yeltsin has died / ng.ru*

Depiction of Boris Yeltsin

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

Figure 31: *Press review / New Playboy star / New version of Diana's death / Zhirinovsky about Hebrews*

Depiction of sports reporter Yulia Bordovskikh, Princess Diana, and State Duma vice-speaker Zhirinovsky

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.121428.html

5) *Crime / arrest:* Banners depicting or referring to criminal activity, police actions, detainment, corruption, and punishment under law, such as the following and Fig. 23, 24:

Figure 32: *Grani.ru / A skinhead killed 37 people*

Depiction of unidentified individual

Date accessed: June 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.polit.ru

Figure 33: *Grani / The creator of the "Night Watch" was arrested*

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

6) *Sexual connotations:* Banners referring to corresponding actions and representations of people, such as the following and Fig. 3 earlier:

Figure 34: *HighWay / Tymoshenko made a spicy diagnosis for Yushchenko*

Depiction of Ukrainian politician Yulia Tymoshenko

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: zadonbass.org

7) *Name of advertiser only:* Banners containing no comments except for the name of the destination website or the organization that had arranged for this ad, such as the following and also Fig. 42, 43:

Figure 35: *Novaia Gazeta* [The new newspaper]

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

1.5.2 FORM

Web banners are not only elements of discourse, but also technical units on a web page. Therefore, the corpus is also analyzed from the point of view of banner shape and technical characterization.

The general technical characterization of web banners widely used in computer and Internet advertising studies relates to the historical development of web banner technology. The first stage of web banner development was static images having only one possible visual appearance. This later developed into animated images which are in essence a sequence of static images. The most advanced banners are interactive units on the web page, which in themselves allow the user to select options on what they are going to see. During the data collection process, I have observed that other technical elements such as Flash ads are starting to replace web banners as a primary method of online advertising. However, as Flash ads are not banners, they are not included in this study.

It is necessary to give a separate explanation of the fact that banners are not coded in regards to their size, position on the web page, and correlation of separate banners on the same page. During the data collection system and database trial run in late April, 2007 it was discovered that each Internet page, when reloaded or accessed several times in a row, changes its appearance in regards to the specific banners presented on it.

It was also observed that the space occupied by the banners on a page is reserved by a specific banner network (the number of such networks was estimated at between 5 and 15, for more on Russian banner networks see Semenov (2002: 80)), which has a banner database of indeterminable magnitude. When a page is loaded, it connects to the banner network database, which provides, at random, one of the banners. No system or regularity was revealed in this respect, as reloading the same page was seen to produce the same banner at the same position on the page as well as different banners at different positions. Thus banner position (or even presence) on the page, as well as the possibility of deliberate correlation of banners (to any extent further than the positioning of banners of the same network at the same reserved locations on the page), are discarded as impossible to track and code to any reliable degree.

Banner size is discarded due to the fact that this factor may vary when the same page is viewed using different Internet browsers, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox or Opera Software. As well, even when the same browser is used, each user may set up personal preferences in terms of zooming in and out of the page or the format in which images are presented, which changes the appearance of the banner, including its relative size. Changing another setting, font size, also alters the layout of objects on the page, which further contributes to the impossibility of tracking banner positioning on the page.

1.5.2.1 General Characteristics

During the analysis of the data obtained at the beginning of this study in May 2007, four shapes of banners with respect to shape and size were singled out:

1) Standard rectangle, as in Fig. 36

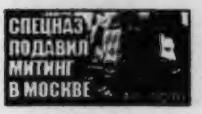


Figure 36: *Riot squad suppressed a rally in Moscow / ng.ru*

Depiction of riot squad officer

Date obtained: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru

2) Standard square, as in Fig. 37

Figure 37: *EJ / The President told how he will spend the oil money-box*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin and a group of journalists

Date accessed: May 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

3) Horizontal ruler, as in Fig. 38

Figure 38: *The President's family. Details / Novye Izvestiia*

Depiction of Naina Yeltsina, widow of Boris Yeltsin

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru/politics

4) Vertical ruler, as in Fig. 39

Figure 39:

InoPressa / Foreign press in Russian

The events in Estonia have revealed deep contradictions within the country

Ségolène Royal: «Sarkozy is not De Gaulle»

Depiction French presidential candidate Ségolène Royal

The Russian master of the black mountains

Depiction of Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru

Looking at the case of the letters employed in the banners, it is possible to see two main types: all upper-case letters (Fig. 2, 22, 40) and both upper- and lower-case letters (Fig. 42, 43, 44). By far the most widely used font colors found are black and white, with yellow, red, blue, purple, and other font colors also present in the data set. However, no links are found between the content of banners and these font characteristics. In this study, the syntax of the banner texts is analyzed in regards to the completeness of grammatical structures. The banners are observed to employ both full and incomplete sentences (e.g. in Fig. 39 above).

1.5.2.2 Interplay of image and text

The visual side of web banners, namely the positioning of the image in relation to the text (within the banner) and the general content of the images, is recorded.

In regards to image positioning, the following cases are observed:

1) Image above the text, as in Fig. 43 and Fig. 44;

2) Image to the left side of the text, as in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2;

3) Image to the right side of the text, as in Fig. 24 and Fig. 38;

4) Image in the centre of the banner, as in Fig. 19;

5) None of the above (other), such as the image being spread throughout the banner, as in Fig. 42, or other undeterminable cases, as in Fig. 40 and Fig. 41 below.

Figure 40: *Russian Economic Forum*

Date accessed: May 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

Figure 41: *Conference of political strategists / July 4-5 / Election 2003*

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru/politics

The images are studied from the point of view of their focus, the resulting classification being into banners with images focusing on one person, as in Fig. 42 and Fig. 43, depicting more than one person, as in Fig. 37 and Fig. 44, and those not depicting people or containing only text, as in Fig. 20 and Fig. 41.

1.5.3 CO-TEXT

The data corpus is analyzed from the point of view of the Gricean maxim of quality ("do not say what you believe to be false or that for which there is no adequate evidence" (Blum-Kulka 1997: 39)). Based on this maxim[2], it is possible to differentiate between true, false, and empty banners.

The **true** banners lead to a page that has material closely connected to the contents of the banner, i.e. the banner serves as a concise description of the page to which it is leading. Consider the following:

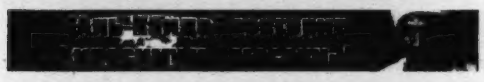


Figure 42: *Will "Al-Qaeda" repeat Hiroshima and Nagasaki?!*

Depiction of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: zadonbass.org

[2] For review of Gricean Cooperation Principle and maxims of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance and their place in Discourse Pragmatics see Blum-Kulka (1997: 38-63).

The banner ad in Fig. 42 leads to an article that discusses alleged Al-Qaeda plans for the development or procurement of a nuclear device with the aim of using it in a major terrorist act in one of the world's largest cities. The connection between the banner and its destination is, therefore, manifest.

A **false** banner at first glance appears very similar to a true banner. It also deals with the general topic of the destination page, as if giving its gist. However, on closer examination the specific idea given in the banner does not appear anywhere in the destination text. The banner thus attracts the viewer to read a story about something that the story does not really tell. Fig. 2 given above serves as a vivid example. The banner in Fig.2, while claiming to lead to "The hottest news item of the hour" and containing the image of the Belarusian President, leads to a short story about Lukashenka's response to the invitation he had received to head a Russian nationalist party. The general connection between the banner and the destination is thus clear: both relate to Lukashenka. However, the story in the destination does not correspond to the idea of "the hottest news", and especially "the hottest news of the hour", a false claim made in the banner ad.

The category of false banners was set up and viewed broadly as those banners that present information in a sensationalist manner, resorting to manipulation and false advertising. As will be seen further, the means through which the effect is achieved in the various false banners may be different, but the banners are grouped together as those going beyond linking elements of discourse and into the creation of a separate text with its own meaning that is not present in either the origin or the destination.

It is simple to differentiate **empty** banners from the two other groups, as this class of banners leads to a page whose contents are not linked to the contents of the banner. For example:

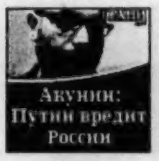


Figure 43: *Grani / Akunin: Putin harms Russia*

Depiction of Russian writer Boris Akunin

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.ej.ru/comments/entry/6911

The banner in Fig. 43 leads to the main page of the grani.ru website. While the article advertised in the banner can be located on the website by using the site's search tool and

browsing through the latest articles, it does not appear on the page to which the banner actually brings the viewer.

Fig. 44 is an even more striking example of an empty web banner:

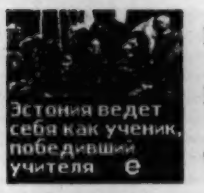


Figure 44: *Estonia behaves like a student that defeated the teacher / EJ*

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

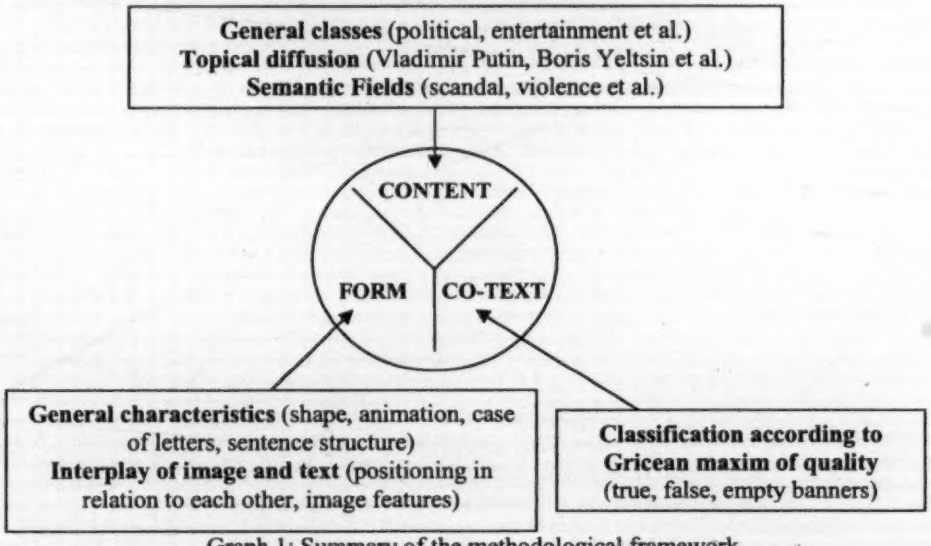
Origin: www.grani.ru

The banner in Fig. 44 specifically states that it advertises an article at the www.ej.ru website. However, when clicking on the banner, one is not taken to that website. Instead, the banner leads to the main page of the www.regions.ru news portal. There is thus no connection between the banner and the destination. However, it should be noted that it was not possible to verify whether such cases were technical errors on the website or deliberate occurrences.

It needs to be specified that the classification of the corpus into true, false, and empty did not include multi-banners due to technical constraints that prevented the recording of multiple destinations for the same graphic unit.

1.5.4 SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Graph 1 below gives an overview of the methodological framework.


General classes (political, entertainment et al.)
Topical diffusion (Vladimir Putin, Boris Yeltsin et al.)
Semantic Fields (scandal, violence et al.)
CONTENT
FORM
CO-TEXT
General characteristics (shape, animation, case of letters, sentence structure)
Interplay of image and text (positioning in relation to each other, image features)
Classification according to Gricean maxim of quality (true, false, empty banners)

Graph 1: Summary of the methodological framework

This framework is based on the simultaneous analysis of banner ads at three major levels: the level of content, the level of form, and the level of co-text. The chapter that follows will describe the application of this model to the selected corpus and highlight the key points brought to light by this analysis.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS

2.1 RESULTS OF THE GENERAL CORPUS

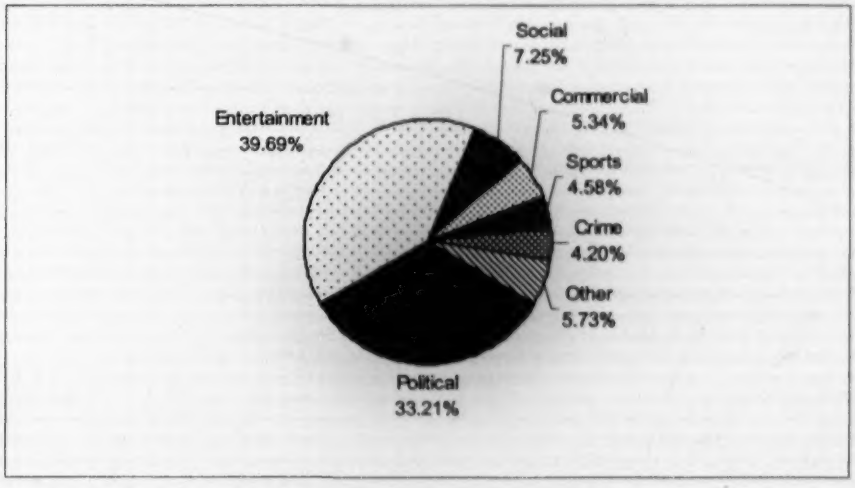
This section presents the analysis of data colleted in May, June, and July 2007 according to the methodological framework described above. The presentation of the analysis follows the same order as outlined in the methodology: content, form, and co-text.

2.1.1 MAY

2.1.1.1 CONTENT

2.1.1.1.1 General Classification

The first data collection period took place from May 1st till May 7th, 2007. In total, 262 items were collected (with multi-banners broken down into components). The breakdown into the previously described general classes is as follows (including repeated occurrences of the same banner): Entertainment – 104, Political – 87, Social – 19, Commercial – 14, Sports – 12, Crime – 11, and Other – 15 (Graph 2).

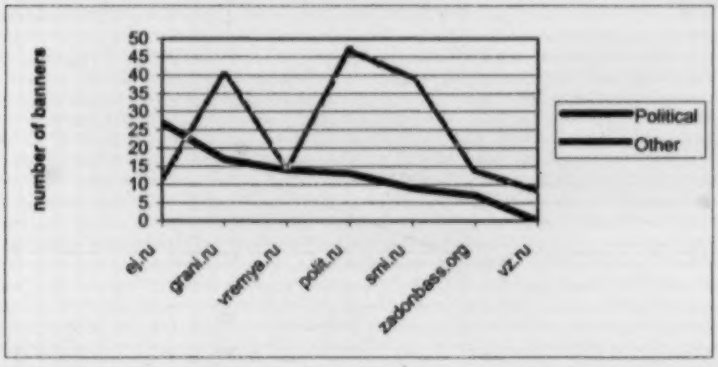


Graph 2: May data by class

Looking at the same data from the point of view of individual websites in the sample, it is possible to see uneven distribution of political banners compared to banners of other classes:

	Number of banners			
	Political	Other	Total	p-value (cf. Section 1.5.1.1.3)
ej.ru	27	12	39	0.0004
grani.ru	17	40	57	0
vremya.ru	14	15	29	0.7937
polit.ru	13	47	60	0
smi.ru	9	39	48	0
zadonbass.org	7	14	21	0.0273
vz.ru	0	8	8	N/A

Table 1: May data by political-other class opposition, broken down by website

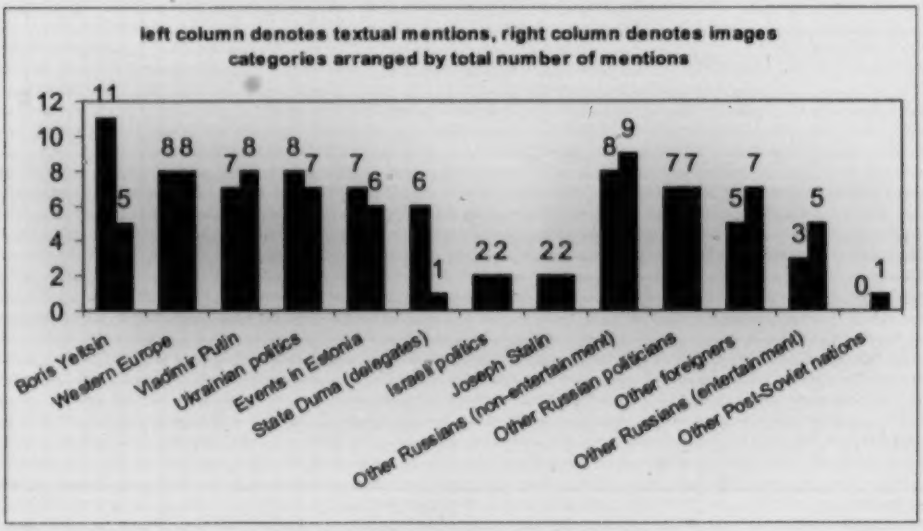


Graph 3: May data by political-other class opposition, broken down by website

As can be seen in Table 1 and Graph 3, the websites having the greatest total number of banners do not rank very high in the number of political banners, but accumulate most of this ranking through non-political banners. One of the websites, vz.ru, which is the Internet portal of the "Vzgliad" newspaper, ranks very low in banners and does not have a single political banner in the May data, but it should be noted that this website extensively employs Flash advertising, which will be discussed in Section 2.2.1. Only one website, www.ej.ru, has a greater share of political banners (69%), with the difference between the number of political and non-political banner ads on this website in May producing a p-value of 0.0004. One site has parity (www.vremya.ru), which accounts for the very high p-value figure. On the site with the greatest total number of banners, www.polit.ru, political banners account for only 21.6% (p-value of 0). As observed by the extremely low p-value figures, the difference is also significant at the grani.ru, smi.ru, and zadonbass.org websites.

2.1.1.1.2 Topical Diffusion

Various topics are present in the May data. The most prominent of them are Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, Politics in Ukraine, Events in Estonia (see timeline in Appendix B), Western Europe, and the State Duma of Russia. Graph 4 gives the full scope of data (it should be noted that the "Other Post-Soviet Nations" category does not include Ukrainian politics and events in Estonia, which constitute separate categories):



Graph 4: Topical diffusion in the May data

The data in Graph 4 demonstrates the different means through which some topics are transferred. For instance, the number of textual mentions of Boris Yeltsin and the State Duma (delegates) is more than double the number of their visual mentions (11 against 5, and 6 against 1, accordingly). No clear reverse case is visible, as only few topics are slightly more visually transferred, such as "Other Post-Soviet nations", mentioned only visually, through the portrait of Lukashenka, in the banner in Fig. 2, and Vladimir Putin, who is depicted but not verbally mentioned in a similar banner shown in Fig. 45.

Figure 45: *Expert / The major scandal of the week*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

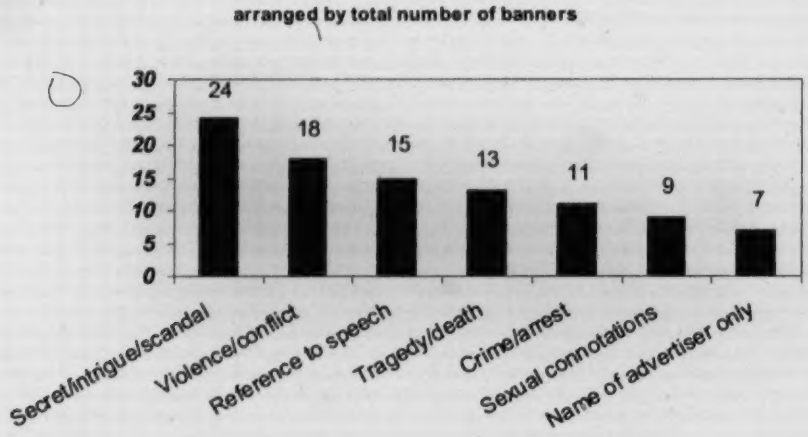
Origin: http://www.ej.ru/comments/entry/6911/

Two major topics, Boris Yeltsin and the Events in Estonia, are directly linked to the current political events of the period. The topic of Ukrainian Politics is mostly found on the zadonbass.org website, which is a Russian-language news portal based in Eastern Ukraine. Israeli Politics is the topic of an ad campaign by newsru.com, which has a Russia-based and an Israel-based edition.

It should be noted that the topics certainly overlap in some of the banners in the data corpus. For example, the banner in Fig. 22 above is classified as both related to the topic of "Boris Yeltsin" due to the textual message and the topic of "Other Russians – entertainment" due to the visual message.

2.1.1.1.3 Semantic Fields

Continuing with the semantic fields analysis of the May data, it is possible to state that scandals, intrigues, and secrets are the most prolific, being present in 27.5% of the political banner components (with multi-banners broken up into parts) collected during this period. The specific results for all the fields are presented in Graph 5 (labels clarified in more detail in the methodology section).



Graph 5: Semantic fields in the May data

It should be noted that many of the fields overlap. As Graph 5 vividly demonstrates, the "name of advertiser only" field is the least represented in the May data, with only 3 actual separate banners, two of which (Fig. 40 and Fig. 35 above) are found thrice. The

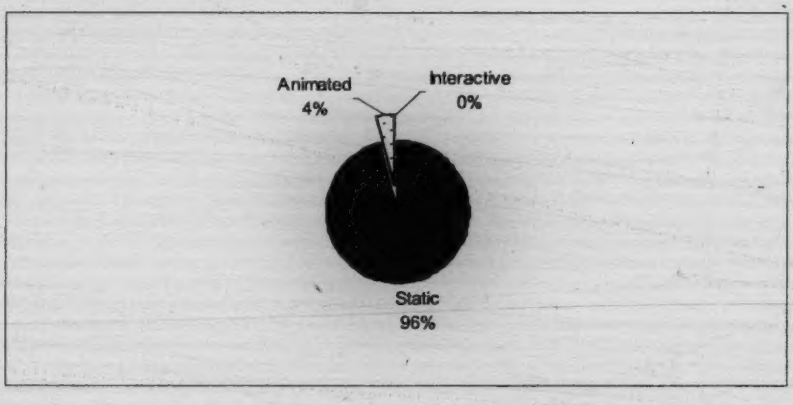
"secret/intrigue/scandal" field contains 15 separate banners, five of which are repeatedly collected at different locations throughout the period. More specifically, the banner presented in Fig. 3 on the details of "sex and sensuality in the State Duma" occurs four times in the May data. The "Putin has chosen a successor" banner presented in Fig. 1 appears three times at different locations in the same period.

An important finding is that in the "violence/conflict" semantic field, eight out of eighteen occurrences are banners concerned with the events in Estonia (see Appendix B). In the "tragedy/death" field, nine out of thirteen occurrences are connected with another major event of the period, the death of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. In the "Sexual connotations" field, five occurrences out of nine are regarding the State Duma, while three of the remaining ones are about Ukrainian politicians.

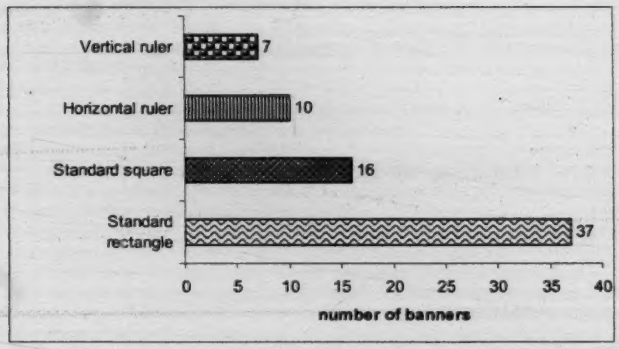
2.1.1.2 FORM

2.1.1.2.1 General Characteristics

From the technical point of view, Graphs 6 and 7 show the high popularity of static and rectangular web banners among the creators of Russian Internet ads (multi-banners are included as integrated units into this classification):



Graph 6: Technical classification of May data



Graph 7: Banners in May data by shape

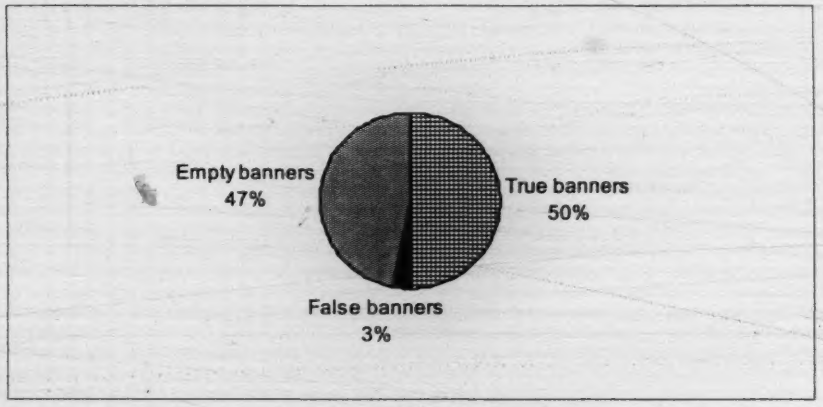
The visual and structural aspect of the banners is analysed with respect to both the text presentation and the image. The use of all-capitalized script is found in 44% of the banners as opposed to 56% employing both capital and small letters. The sentence structure of roughly half of the May banners (34 out of 70) is incomplete, while 29 others contain full sentences and 7 present a combination of full and incomplete sentences.

2.1.1.2.2 Interplay of Image and Text

Image position in relation to the text varies greatly, with the image above the text in 33% of the banners, to the left side of the text in 31%, and to the right side of the text in 20%. 9% of the May data banners have the image in the middle, and 7% have either no image or are otherwise impossible to classify in this respect (i.e. the image and the text overlap or there are multiple images). 67% of the banners in the May data have images focusing on one person, 14% focus on two or more people, and 19% do not depict people or have no image in them.

2.1.1.3 CO-TEXT

Analyzing the May data through the prism of the true-false-empty classification, that is, using Gricean maxim of quality (cf. Section 1.5.3 above), it is possible to see the overall prevalence of true and empty banners, splitting the total number of banners in this data segment almost in half, with only 2 false banners (Graph 8). It should be noted that multi-banners are not included in this classification due to technical constraints.



Graph 8: May data by Gricean quality

The majority of true banners are easily identifiable as they contain either the title or a direct quote from the destination text. One of the two false web banners in this data set (Fig. 2) was discussed above. The second one is presented in Fig. 46 below.

Figure 46: *Lenta.ru / They found a woman for Hitler*

Depiction of actress Jodie Foster

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

The banner in Fig. 46 leads to a www.lenta.ru article entitled "Jodie Foster will play Hitler's muse" that tells about the selection of the actress for the role of Leni Riefenstahl. While there is a link between the idea expressed in the banner and the destination text, the banner provides information in a sensationalist manner. In other words, the banner introduces in a sensationalist way a destination text that is not written in the same tone.

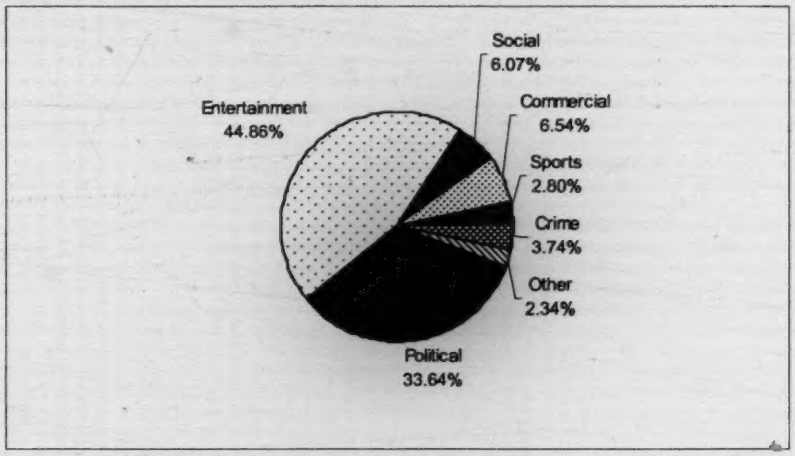
Overall, 28 destination websites are found for the 70 political banners in the May corpus. One of the origin websites under review, www.grani.ru, has 8 banners of its own being the leader among destination websites in the number of banners leading to it. Only one other origin website, www.ej.ru, also had banners of its own, thus being both an origin and a destination.

2.1.2 JUNE

2.1.2.1 CONTENT

2.1.2.1.1 General Classification

The second data collection period lasted from the 1st until the 7th of June, 2007. Overall, 214 items were collected from the seven origin websites, of which 72 were political, 96 entertainment, 14 commercial, 13 social, 6 sports, 8 crime, and 5 other (Graph 9). It should be noted that 13 (20%) of the political banner units (i.e. viewing multi-banners as one unit) found in June are the same as in May (Fig. 1, 2, 3, 30, 35, 40, 45).

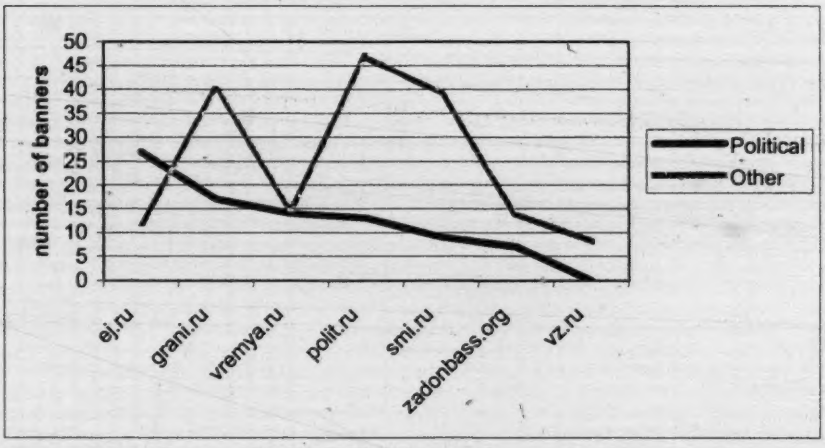


Graph 9: June data by class

Comparing this data to the data from May, it is possible to see a slight increase in the number of entertainment banners and only minor shifts in the ratio of the various other classes. There is, however, more variation in the distribution of political and non-political web banners at the seven websites (Table 2 and Graph 10):

	Number of banners			
	Political	Other	Total	p-value
ej.ru	24	19	43	0.2807
grani.ru	17	26	43	0.0504
polit.ru	13	32	45	0
vremya.ru	7	16	23	0.0061
zadonbass.org	6	20	26	0
smi.ru	4	28	32	0
vz.ru	1	1	2	N/A

Table 2: June data by political-other class opposition, broken down by websites

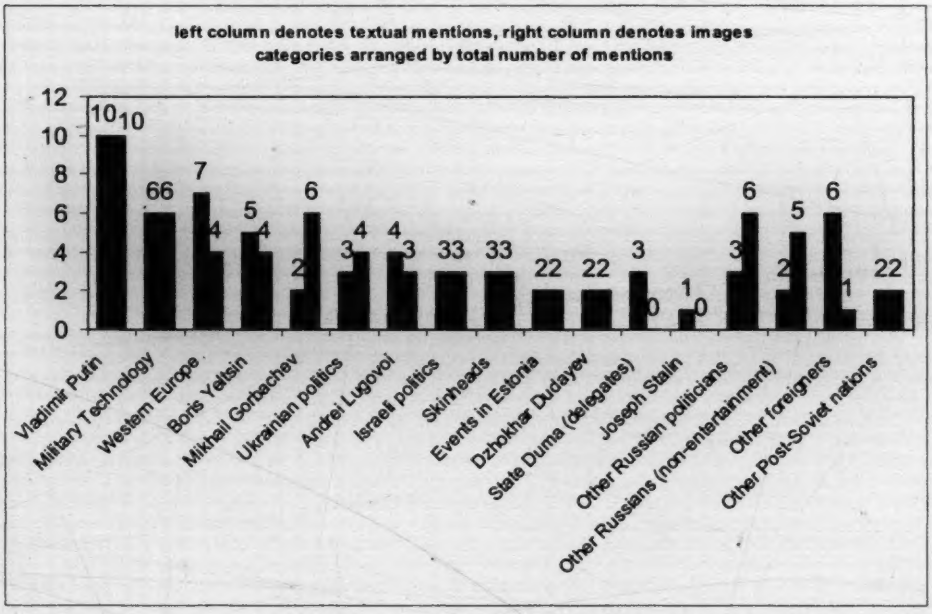


Graph 10: June data by political-other class opposition, broken down by websites

Table 2 and Graph 10 point out that the May and June data sets have some similar and some divergent features. While ej.ru retains its status as the leader in the number of political banners, the difference in the number of political and non-political banners is no longer significant. Vremya.ru, which had almost parity of the two groups in May, has more than twice as many non-political as political banners in the June data set (p-value of 0.0061). Vz.ru is still seen as employing banners to a much smaller extent (2 out of 214 items). The number of political and non-political banners ads on grani.ru becomes more similar from the statistical point of view. There is no significant shift in the data from polit.ru, zadonbass.org, and smi.ru, all of which display a prevalence of non-political over political banners.

2.1.2.1.2 Topical Diffusion

As in the May corpus, there is much topical diffusion in the June data (Graph 11):



Graph 11: Topical diffusion in the June data

As in May, the most prolific topics in the June data corpus are Vladimir Putin, Military Technology, Western Europe, Boris Yeltsin, and Ukrainian Politics. However, such topics as Events in Estonia and the State Duma (delegates) become less prominent in June, while several new topics, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Andrei Lugovoi, Military Technology, and Skinheads, attain prominence during the same period. As in May, the prominence of specific topics can be partially explained through the study of the events of the period (see Timeline). To give an example, the topic of Military Technology, which was not singled out previously due to lack of data on it (no banners on this topic in May), had made sufficient gains by June. This appears to be connected to the developments in the US-Russia and NATO-Russia relations in late June about the US plans of deploying its missile defence systems in Eastern Europe and further NATO expansion to the East.

Graph 11 points to the fact that some topics are transferred either verbally or visually. Interestingly, the one mention of Joseph Stalin in the June data is the following banner about the fate of his son (Fig. 47):

Figure 47: *The FSB* [Federal Security Service] *found out how Stalin's son behaved in German captivity / newsru.com*

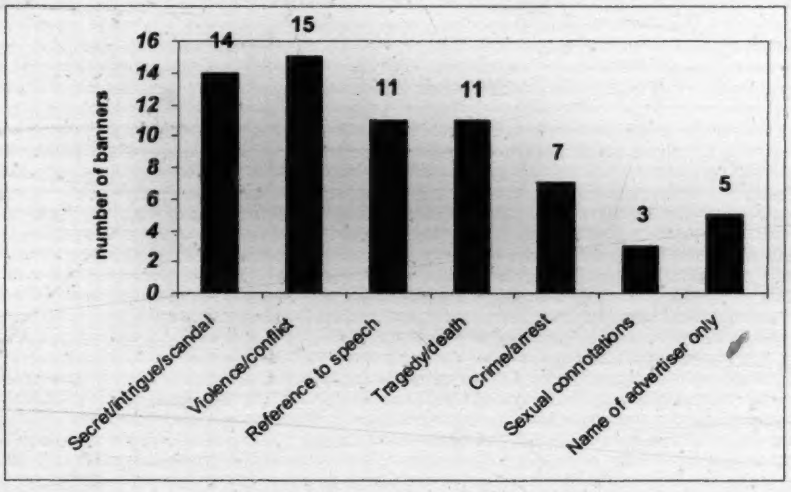
Date accessed: June 6th, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/

The topic of Mikhail Gorbachev is mentioned in text only twice, but Mikhail Gorbachev himself is portrayed six times in the data corpus. The State Duma and Joseph Stalin are not included in any images in the web banners, but are mentioned in text. Two of the three banners in June mentioning the Duma are the same as one of the banners in May (Fig. 3).

2.1.2.1.3 Semantic Fields

The semantic fields present in the June data segment are distributed similarly to what is found in the May data, with some variation. The "secret/intrigue/scandal" field, which was prevalent in the May data, here shares the lead with the "violence/conflict" field, while the neutral "name of advertiser only" field becomes slightly more prominent (Graph 12):



Graph 12: Semantic fields in the June data

It should be noted that the "name of advertiser only" field consists of only two separate banners, Fig. 35 repeated three times and Fig. 40 found twice. The "Sexual connotations"

field consists of two separate banners, both of which deal with the subject-matter of parliament. This is illustrated in Fig. 3 in the May data and Fig. 48 below:

Figure 48: *I love porn / Members of parliament want to terminate access to pornographic websites / newsru.co.il*

Date accessed: June 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7128

Four out of eleven banners in the "tragedy/death" field in the June data segment are directly linked to the death of Boris Yeltsin despite the fact that he had died on the 23rd of April. Two more banners in the field dealt with "the fate of Dzhokhar Dudayev", Yeltsin's rival during the conflict in Chechnya.

The May 31st press-conference by Andrei Lugovoi, a former FSB operative accused by British authorities of poisoning Alexander Litvinenko, is prominent in the "reference to speech" field, with three multi-banners (Fig. 49, 50, 51) touching upon this topic. Interestingly, only one separate banner deals with this subject, and all the following multi-banners are found on the www.ej.ru website.

Figure 49:

InoPressa / Foreign press in Russian

"The absolute and pure democrat" Vladimir Putin

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Litvinenko's widow denies Lugovoi's accusations

Depiction of Marina Litvinenko

King of pornography promises a million dollars for a political sex scandal

Depiction of Larry Flynt

Date accessed: June 7th, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7140

Figure 50:

Radio Liberty

Participants of orgies were put to sleep, raped and infected with HIV

Lugovoi made British special services laugh

Depiction of Andrei Lugovoi

"Big book": three million at stake

Date accessed: June 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7128

Figure 51:

InoPressa / Foreign press in Russian

No matter how much Lugovoi might be excited, "of course, the Russians did it"

Depiction of Andrei Lugovoi

Unexpected president of Latvia

Depiction of Latvian President Valdis Zatlers

Scandal around HIV-parties augments in Holland"

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7126

The "crime/arrest" field is dominated by the banner in Fig. 32, "skinhead killed 37 people", connected to the capture of a skinhead adherent in Moscow late in May who had confessed in the murder of as many as 40 people.

Consider the following:

Figure 52:

Newsru.co.il

Giuliani is prepared to use nuclear weapons against Iran

Depiction of ex-mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani

A new breed of Israeli hawk was produced in Damascus: "Amir Meretz" (misspelled in original)

Depiction of Israeli politician Amir Peretz

Beauties of the Vogue will not come to the Near East

Date accessed: June 7th, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7140

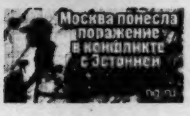


Figure 53: *Moscow suffered defeat in the conflict with Estonia / ng.ru*

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

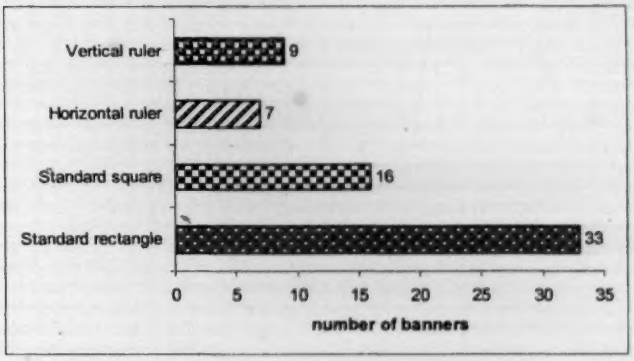
Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.122929.html

The "violence/conflict" field has a high number of foreign-related topics: Georgia, World Trade Organization, Estonia, the USA, France, Afghanistan, Israel, Iran, and Syria were mentioned in them.

2.1.2.2 FORM

2.1.2.2.1 General Characteristics

From the technical point of view, the June data is quite similar to the May data. There is only one animated political web banner in the June segment, compared to three in the May segment, the rest being static. The distribution by banner shape is the same, as shown in Graph 13:



Graph 13: June data by banner shape

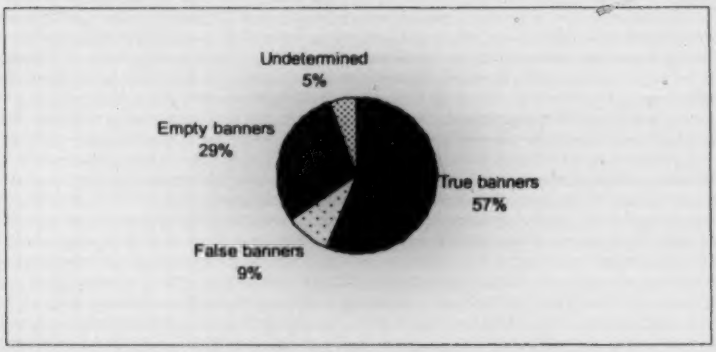
34% of banners in the June data employ all-caps script, compared to 44% a month earlier. More banners in the June data employ full sentence structure (57% as compared to only 41% in May). 35% have incomplete sentences only, and 8% have a mixture of complete and incomplete sentence structure.

2.1.2.2.2 Interplay of Image and Text

In regards to image position in relation to the text, there is more prevalence of the image-above-text format, with 43% of the June data in this format. 29% have the image to the left side of the text, 11% to the right side of the text, 9% in the centre of the banner, and 8% are classified as "other". 71% focus on one person, 11% on two or more people, and 18% do not depict any people or have no image in them, which is comparable to the May figures.

2.1.2.3 CO-TEXT

There is some variation in the June data with respect to the true-false-empty differentiation. While the number of true banners remained the same, the number of empty banners dropped, the false banners became more visible, and a new category, "undetermined", was instituted due to apparent technical problems of the major banner networks during a short period in data collection which made it impossible to reach the destination pages. The data is presented graphically below (this classification excludes multi-banners):



Graph 14: June data by Gricean quality

The growth in the ratio of false banners appears most important to this study. A false banner that appears four times in the June data set is the following:

Figure 54: *The hottest news item of the hour*

Depiction of Mikhail Gorbachev

Date accessed: June 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

The banner in Fig. 54 leads to a www.expert.ru webpage with links to several articles about Mikhail Gorbachev. No news items, especially "hottest" news items, are present on the page or linked to it. This is a vivid example of false advertisement to which the banner creators resort in order to attract viewership. It should be noted that the same banner in several other occurrences is classified as empty, as it is leading to the main page of the www.expert.ru portal instead of the page about Gorbachev.

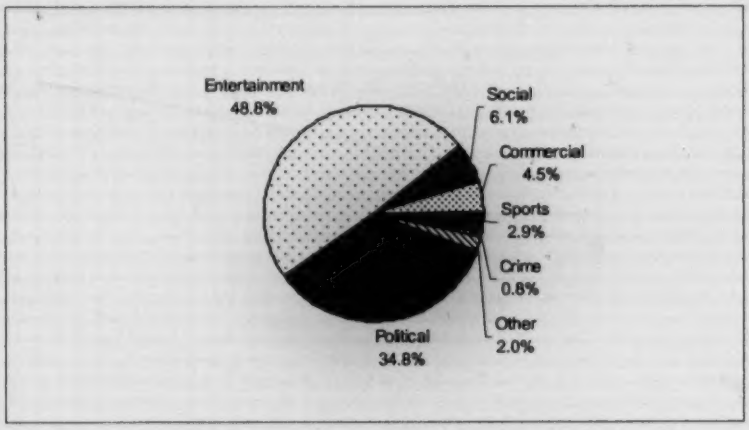
Overall, 23 destination websites are found for the 65 political banner units collected in June. Three of the original websites under review, grani.ru, polit.ru, and ej.ru, have banners of their own, and while ej.ru and polit.ru has one and two own banners respectively, grani.ru has six.

2.1.3. JULY

2.1.3.1 CONTENT

2.1.3.1.1 General Classification

The third and last data collection session took place during the first week of July, 2007. In total, 244 items were collected, of which 85 are classified as political, 119 entertainment, 15 social, 11 commercial, 7 sports, 2 crime, and 5 other (Graph 15). 8 (4%) of the political web banners units in this segment were repeats from May, 12 (6%) - from June, and 7 (3.5%) had been present previously in both the May and the June data segments.

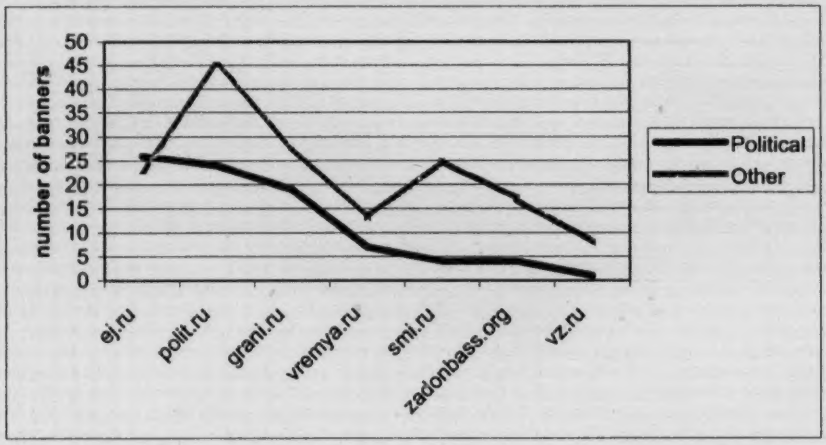


Graph 15: July data by general classes

Looking at this data, it is possible to observe that the July data segment has the greatest number of both political and entertainment banners out of the three months studied, and the month with the smallest number of commercial, crime, and miscellaneous (other) banners. The distribution of political and non-political banners at the analyzed web sites is as follows (Table 3 and Graph 16):

	Number of banners			
	Political	Other	Total	p-value
ej.ru	26	23	49	0.5451
polit.ru	24	45	69	0.0003
grani.ru	19	28	47	0.0617
vremya.ru	7	13	20	0.0539
smi.ru	4	25	29	0
zadonbass.org	4	17	21	0
vz.ru	1	8	9	0.3198

Table 3: July data by political-other class opposition, broken down by websites

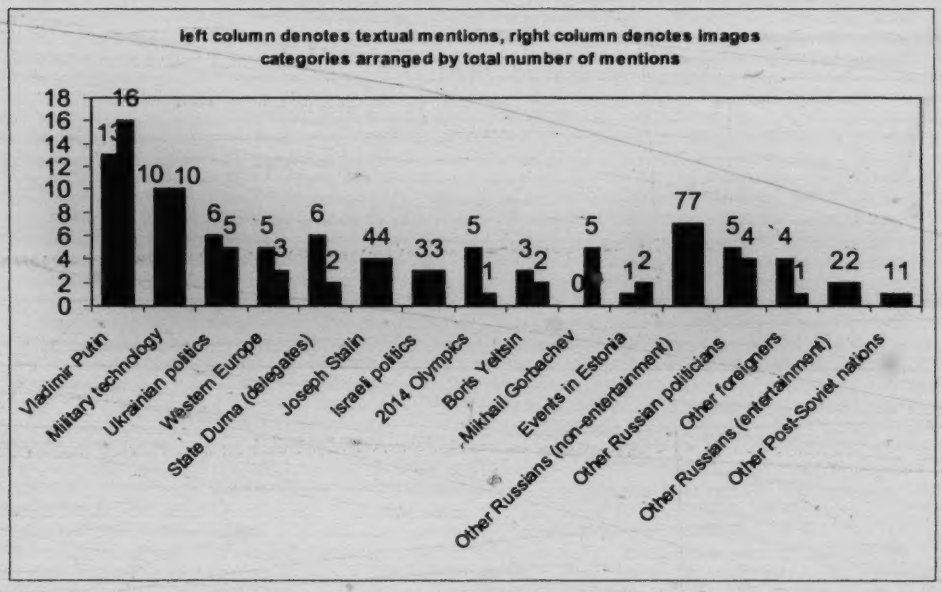


Graph 16: July data by political-other class opposition, broken down by websites

Table 3 and Graph 16 show that ej.ru, grani.ru, vremya.ru, and vz.ru have an insignificant difference in the number of political and non-political banners, while the three remaining websites, polit.ru, zadonbass.org, and smi.ru, have a visible prevalence of non-political web banners. At the website with the greatest overall banner number, polit.ru, the proportion of political banners to non-political in the month of July is 1 to 1.9 (p-value of 0.0003).

2.1.3.1.2 Topical Diffusion

Visible changes occurred in the topical diffusion in the July data. The most prolific topics during this time period are: Vladimir Putin, Military Technology, Ukrainian Politics, Western Europe, and the State Duma (Graph 17):



Graph 17: Topical diffusion in the July data

Graph 17 shows that topics such as Boris Yeltsin, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Events in Estonia, which were very visible in May and/or June segments of the data, are seen much less in July. The topic of Military Technology made further gains as the US-Russia and NATO-Russia conflict continued. At the very end of this data collection session, a new topic, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia became visible, resulting from the 4th of July decision of the International Olympics Committee on this issue in favour of the Russian bid to host the games. Interestingly, the banners concerned with this topic appeared already on the next day, July 5th.

As in the previous months, it is observed that some topics are transmitted verbally more than visually, and vice versa. For example, the 2014 Olympics are specified in text five times, and visually represented only once by the banner in Fig. 55:

Figure 55: *Sochi 2014 / Candidate city / Sochi Olympics – a national catastrophe / Expert*

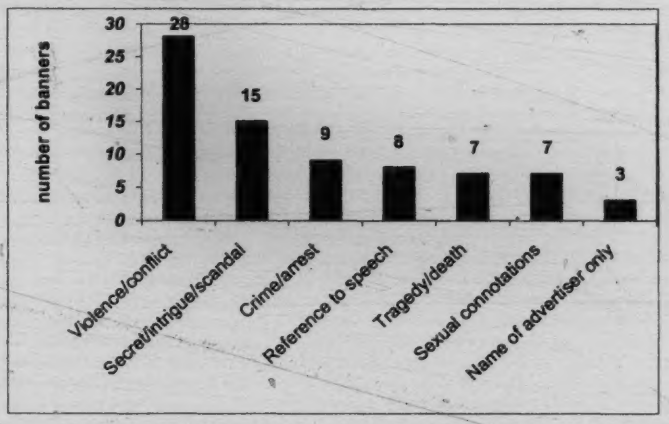
Date accessed: July 7th, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7224

In contrast, Mikhail Gorbachev is pictured five times, but not mentioned verbally even once.

2.1.3.1.3 Semantic Fields

The distribution of political banners in the July data segment by semantic field is different from the one observed in the two previous months (Graph 18):



Graph 18: Semantic fields in the July data

As Graph 18 shows, the "violence/conflict" field is by far the most prolific one in the July segment, almost twice as large as the runner-up "secret/intrigue/scandal" field. The majority of banners in the "violence/conflict" field are those connected with military technology and war, and mentioning the names of multiple countries, as in the following:

Figure 56: *The USA is preparing* [grammar mistake in Russian original, use of singular verb form instead of the required plural] *a nuclear surprise for the Kremlin / ng.ru*

Date accessed: July 4th, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/Regions/m.124309.html

Figure 57:
Air forces of India and Great Britain will conduct manoeuvres

Russia and Ukraine will share with India

Venezuela will be supplied with "Warsaw-class" [submarines]

Lenta.ru / latest news

Date accessed: July 4th, 2007

Origin:
http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/Regions/m.124309.html

Figure 58: *Russia will get rich on the war with Iran*

Date accessed: July 5th, 2007

Origin: http://www.smi.ru/

In the "tragedy/death" field, only one instance is connected to Boris Yeltsin's death, and four (2 actual banners) refer to the disclosure of a CIA report on the death of Joseph Stalin (Fig. 59 and 60):

Figure 59: *Grani.ru / CIA report on the death of Stalin*

Depiction of Joseph Stalin

Date accessed: July 5th, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/news/2007/07/05/medvedev.html

[article about Russian deputy prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev]

Figure 60: *EchoMSK.Ru / CIA published secret documents about Stalin's death*

Depiction of Joseph Stalin

Date accessed: July 4th, 2007

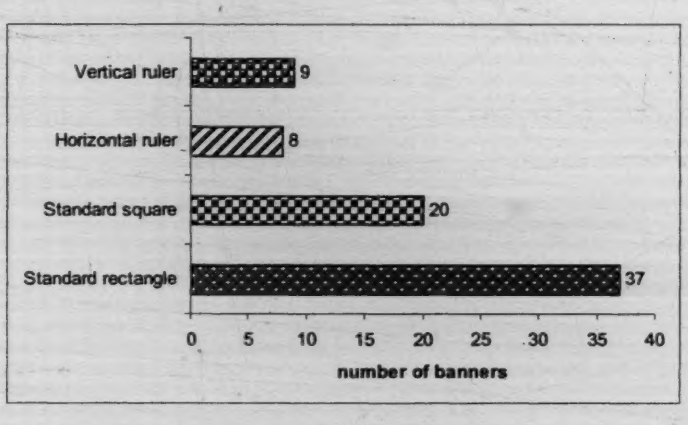
Origin: http://www.vremya.ru/

As in the previous months, a major part of the "Sexual connotations" field is made up of the banner presented in Fig. 3 above (4 out of 7 cases in the July data).

2.1.3.2 FORM

2.1.3.2.1 General Characteristics

In reference to general technical characteristics, the July data is similar to that collected in the two previous months. There are 5 animated banners (7%), the rest being static. The distribution of banners by shape is as follows:



Graph 19: July banners by shape

In 66% of the banners in this data segment, capitalized letters are used together with lower-case ones, while in 34% there are only upper-case letters. These figures exactly match those for June. With respect to sentence structure, 35 banners employ only full sentences, 35 – no full sentences, and 4 have a mixture of the two types.

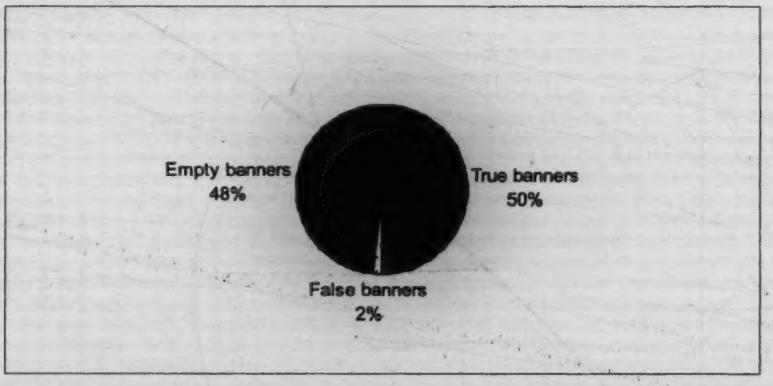
2.1.3.2.2 Interplay of Image and Text

The image is placed above the text in 42% (31) of political banners in July, in 27% (20) it is to the left side of the text. In this set, 12% have the image in the centre of the banner, 12% to the right side of the text, and 7% are classified as "other". Moreover, in the July data, 53% (39) of the July data have images focusing on one person, while 36% (27)

have images depicting more than one person. 11% (8) do not depict people or have no images in them.

2.1.3.3 CO-TEXT

The distribution of July data by the true-false-empty criterion is similar to the one found in the May segment:



Graph 20: July data by the Gricean quality

While there is only one false banner in this data segment, it is a striking example of this category:

Figure 61: *Grani.ru / Ruslan Aushev murdered*

Depiction of two police officers

Date accessed: July, 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7204

The banner in Fig. 61 refers to the murder of Ruslan Aushev. A known person by that name is a former President of Ingushetia and a prominent political figure in the Caucasus. The article to which the banner leads relates the details of a military operation in Ingushetia that resulted in the death of another Ruslan Aushev, a separatist militant. The article specifically mentions that the killed militant is a complete namesake of the well-known politician, who is alive and well. The banner thus appears to be an element of deception through the employment of this specific ambiguous text.

In this data segment overall, 22 destination pages were found for the 74 political banner units. The grani.ru website, which is one of the original websites under study displays 9 banners of its own during this period. Another original website, polit.ru, possesses one.

2.1.4 THREE-MONTH PERIOD: MAY, JUNE, JULY

2.1.4.1 CONTENT

2.1.4.1.1 General Classification

By the end of the data collection process, the general data corpus amounted to 720 banner unit occurrences (372 actual banners). Specifically, the entire data corpus includes 244 political banner unit occurrences (133 individual political banners, 34 of which are recorded several times throughout the data collection period) and 476 occurrences of banner units of other classes (239 individual banners). The overall distribution of data by the general classes is as follows:

%	May	June	July	Three Months
Political	33.21	33.64	34.84	33.90
Entertainment	39.69	44.86	48.77	44.44
Social	7.25	6.07	6.15	6.49
Commercial	5.34	6.54	4.51	5.46
Sports	4.58	2.80	2.87	3.42
Crime	4.20	3.74	0.82	2.92
Other	5.73	2.34	2.05	3.37

Table 4: General corpus distribution by class

When studying the distribution of political and non-political banners at the seven analyzed websites, it is possible to see the overall prevalence of non-political banners on all but one of these websites (ej.ru) for each separate month and the entire study period:

%	May	June	July	Three Months
ej.ru	69.23	55.81	53.06	59.37
vremya.ru	48.28	30.43	35.00	37.90
grani.ru	29.82	39.53	40.43	36.59
polit.ru	21.67	28.89	34.78	28.45
zadonbass.org	33.33	23.08	19.05	25.15
vz.ru	0.00	50.00	11.11	20.37
smi.ru	18.75	12.50	13.79	15.01

Table 5: Ratio of political banners by website

Only two political banners (Fig. 3 – "sex and sensuality in the State Duma", and Fig. 35 – "Novaia Gazeta") are found in all three data collection periods, having 10 and 9 occurrences respectively. Several other political banners are found in two out of three data segments. Two more banners that have a high number of occurrences are Fig. 54 ("hottest news item of the hour" picturing Gorbachev), with 9 occurrences overall, and Fig. 62, with 7 occurrences:

Figure 62: *Lenta.ru / The USA have tested a hypersonic airplane*

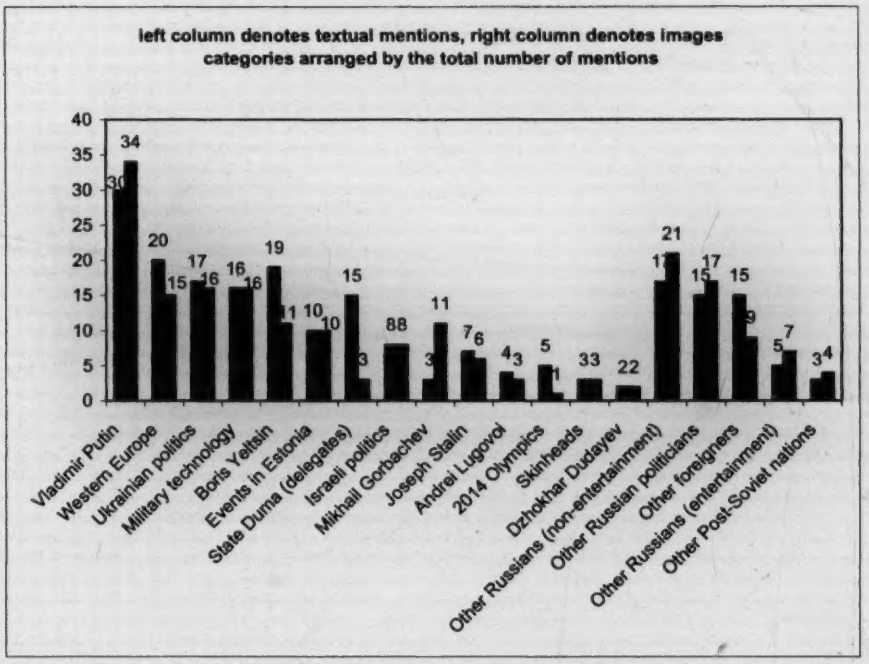
Date accessed: June 6th, 2007

Origin: http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/

It should be noted that the banner in Fig. 62 appeared at five out of seven origin websites.

2.1.4.1.2 Topical Diffusion

The topics of Western Europe, Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian Politics, State Duma (delegates), Joseph Stalin, Israeli Politics, Events in Estonia, and Boris Yeltsin are present throughout the data collection period, while some other topics, as was mentioned above, appear only in one or two of the data segments. The overall picture on topical diffusion is as follows:

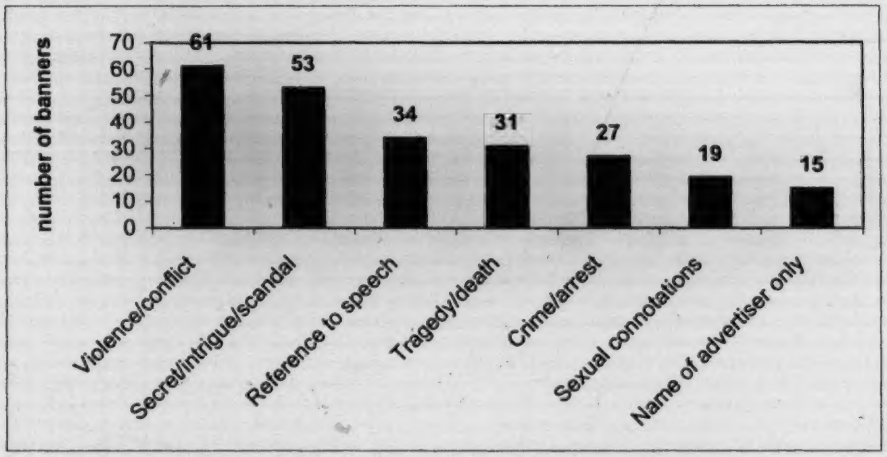


Graph 21: Topical Diffusion in the entire data corpus

Graph 21 presents the general ranking of the topics in the corpus. Moreover, it sheds more light on the issue of means through which various topics are presented. It is possible to observe that while such topics as Boris Yeltsin, State Duma, 2014 Olympics, and Western Europe are presented considerably more through the text, such topics as Vladimir Putin and Mikhail Gorbachev are depicted more visually than mentioned verbally. A number of topics can also be seen to be presented evenly by both text and images.

2.1.4.1.3 Semantic Fields

The overall distribution of banners by semantic fields is the following:



Graph 22: Distribution of the entire corpus by semantic fields

Overall, a rather stable distribution is observed throughout the period. As was mentioned previously, the current political events influence this distribution to a visible extent. For example, Boris Yeltsin's death contributed to the prominence of the "tragedy/death" field while the events in Estonia contributed to the "Violence/conflict" field in the May data segment. Interestingly, the field without any evaluative characteristics, "name of advertiser only" is the least prominent in all the segments studied.

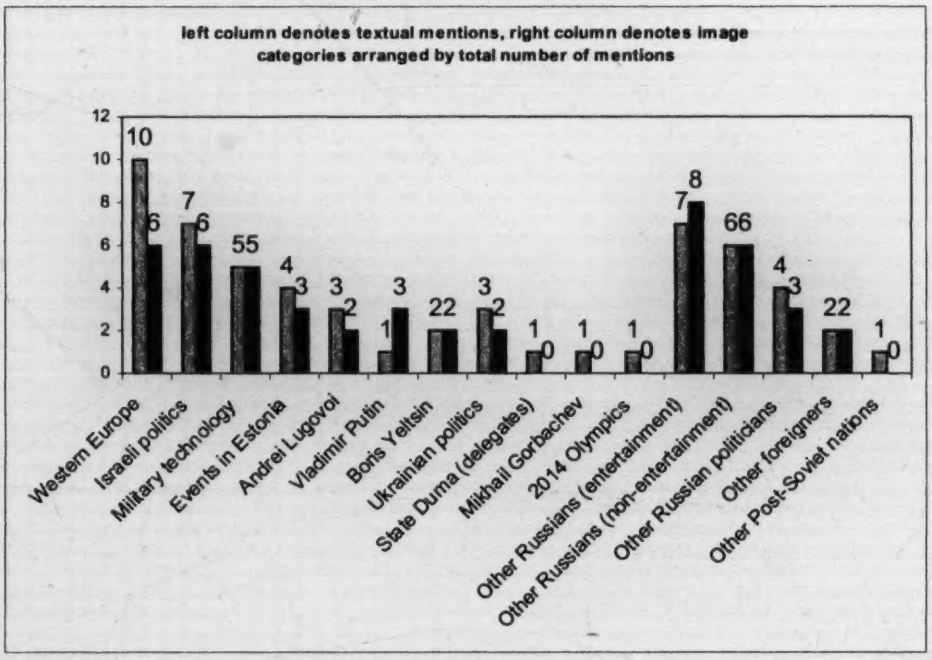
2.1.4.1.4 Multi-Banners

During the entire study period, there are 33 occurrences of multi-banners: 12 in May, 10 in June, and 11 in July. In the sample, there are 22 vertical and 11 horizontal multi-banners (p-value of 0.0055), with no difference noted in the distribution of topics by the two types. Elements falling under the political class exclusively are found in 12 multi-banners. There are combinations of political class with other classes in 21 multi-banners (p-value of 0.0245). The 21 multi-banners containing political and non-political elements could be divided into 62 components. Out of these, 30 are political, 24 entertainment, 6 crime, 1 sports, and 1 other.

In these multi-banners, the prominence of political elements is predictable. Only the banners which are classified as "political" initially are analyzed here. Interestingly, out of 21 multi-banners with a mixture of elements of various classes, only one does not have an entertainment element. No specific patterns for the arrangement of elements of different

classes are found. Such strings as entertainment-entertainment-political, political-political-entertainment, crime-political-entertainment, political-entertainment-crime, among others, are found in the corpus.

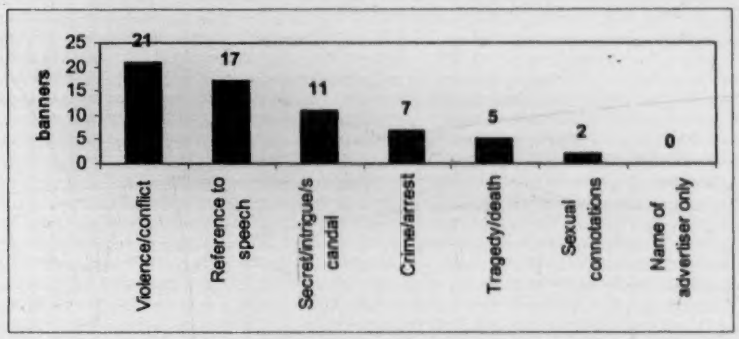
The topical diffusion among multi-banners is as follows:



Graph 23: Topical diffusion among multi-banners

It is interesting to see that some of the topics prominent in the corpus as a whole, such as Vladimir Putin, Boris Yeltsin, and Ukrainian politics, are less visible among multi-banners. The three major topics found, Western politics, Israeli politics, and Military Technology, are all highly present within separate ad campaigns by InoPressa.Ru ("The Foreign Press"), Newsru.com (mentioned above as a joint Russian-Israeli web resource), and Lenta.Ru. Please note that Lenta.ru initiated a separate section on Military at the time.

The following distribution of multi-banners by semantic fields is observed:



Graph 24: Multi-banners in the corpus by semantic field

Multi-banners are studied in more detail in regards to the overlap and interaction of elements of different classes in Section 2.3.

2.1.4.2 FORM

2.1.4.2.1 General Characteristics

Regarding general technical characteristics, a significant level of stability is observed throughout the study. In the entire corpus, only 9 banner units (4.3%) are animated, while the remaining 200 are static. Slightly more than half of the banner units (107) are rectangular in shape and 52 (25%) are square. The two ruler-shape banner types both have 25 banner units (12%). The distribution of banners by theses shapes is even throughout the data collection period. Interestingly, this data on the Russian Internet is strikingly different from the figures given by Janoschka (2004: 227) for banner formats in the Internet's largest sector, the US. According to these figures, the "full banner" format ("horizontal ruler" in present classification) was employed by "92% of the top traditional advertisers in the United States" in 2003. In addition, this format was "the most widely used ad format during the past years of online advertising" (Janoschka 2004: 51).

Similar stability is observed in reference to the script: 131 (62.6%) of the banner units employ the regular mixture of upper- and lower-case letters and the remaining 78 (37.4%) present information in capitalized letters only. There is also only slight variation

with respect to sentence structure: 48.3% of full sentences, 46.8% of incomplete sentences, and 4.9% of both.

2.1.4.2.2 Interplay of image and text

There is not a statistically significant variation of image positioning in respect to the text. 39.2% of the banner units have the image above the text, 29.1% - to the left side of the text, 14.3% - to the right side of the text, 10% - in the middle of the banner, and 7.1% are classified as "other" in this regard.

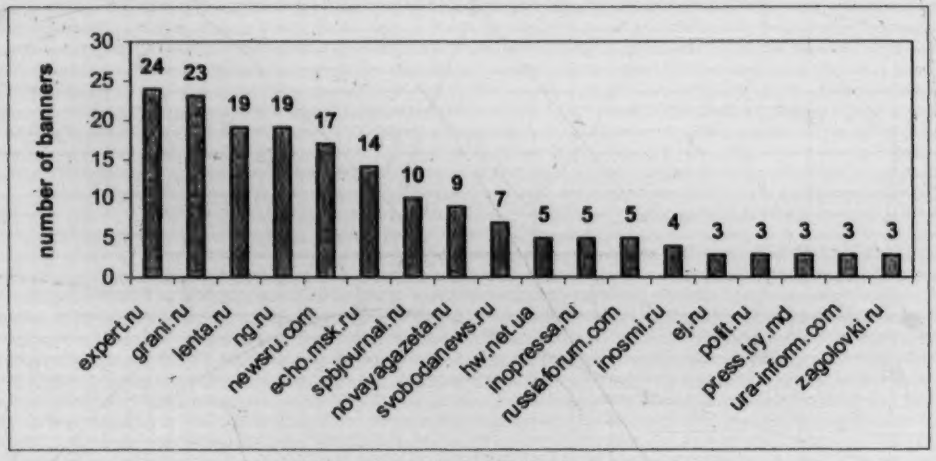
A statistically relevant shift is observed in regards to the image focus. The May vs. June-July shift in the number of banners depicting no people or containing only text (from 13 to 12 to 27), namely the unexpectedly high number of such banners in the July segment, needs to be analyzed in detail (May vs. July p-value of 0.0153; June vs. July p-value of 0.0159). The two other types, focus on one person and focus on more than one person, have only minor variation throughout the study. They amount to 63% and 20% respectively.

2.1.4.3 CO-TEXT

The analysis of co-text of banners under investigation reveals some variation between the data segments. The number of true banners is relatively stable throughout the study: 50% in May, 57% in June, and 50% in July. There is only minimal variation in the ratio of false banners, and the small total number of them (8 out of 175) further decreases the significance of the difference in this category. However, the empty banners make up 41.7 % of the corpus under analysis (73 out of 175). The variation in their number from June (16 out of 55) to July (30 out of 62) is deemed in need of further clarification on a larger data set (p-value of 0.0307).

Interestingly, at different points in the data collection process some banners are not classified as belonging to the same categories. To take an example, the banner in Fig. 61 on July 1st, 2007 is marked as false, but on July 7th, 2007 the same banner is found to be empty and not leading to the same page as earlier banner.

Overall, 43 destination websites are found for the 209 political web banner units. While a number of these advertising websites are present throughout the corpus (such as expert.ru – 11.48% of banners, grani.ru – 11% of banners, lenta.ru and ng.ru – both 9.09%, and other), others are observed in one or two data segments. Among these, in the study period 17 occur only once and 8 twice. Graph 25 provides the data for the 18 websites the banners advertising which are found three or more times in the corpus.



Graph 25: Advertised websites in the corpus

It is possible to observe in Graph 25 that out of these advertising websites, 15 are based in Russia, 2 are based in Ukraine, and 1 – in Moldova (i.e. advertisers from Ukraine and Moldova put their ads on Russian political websites). It is important to discriminate between these eighteen websites and the seven websites originally under study. These eighteen destination websites are the websites that were advertised in banners. The original seven are the ones that the banners were located on.

Notably, grani.ru, ej.ru, and polit.ru were found to be both advertisers and locations of advertising. Grani.ru has a significant number of own banners within the corpus, being one of the most active advertisers observed. Ej.ru and polit.ru both have only 3 own banners in the corpus. Moreover, all the polit.ru banners are internal, i.e. leading from one polit.ru page to another.

2.2. DISCUSSION OF THE GENERAL CORPUS

This project initiated the review of three aspects of banner ads: content, form, and co-text. The full scope of quantitative data acquired during the analysis permits a discussion of banners in a more complex and integrated manner than has been done heretofore.

2.2.1 CONTENT

2.2.1.1 Strict classification of banners

The general classification of banners into classes (Political, Entertainment, Social, Commercial, Sports, Crime, and Other), which is necessary for the initial analysis of the specific object of study, produces the most intriguing results. In general, it is observed that the creators of banner ads resort most widely to the presentation of entertainment and political items through these ads. In these banners, such spheres as social and commercial advertising, as well as discussion of sports and criminal events are shown to exist much less.

In this study, the classes are set up and outlined in a rigid manner, but banner ads have proved to be most unruly. The presence of features of several classes within a banner, as well as the outlined phenomenon of multi-banners, which constitute a combination of several individual banners often belonging to different classes, points to the impossibility of a clear-cut classification with a minimal number of exceptions.

Interestingly, out of the top seven political web portals, only banner ads in ej.ru are seen to turn to politics more than to other subjects. However, closer study of the issue points to the extensive use of class fusion in the banners on this website. These phenomena raise several issues that are important for understanding the nature of banner ads, as will be discussed further in Section 2.3.

2.2.1.2 Topics in Russian political banners

Political banners are observed to relate to a wide variety of topics, both domestic and international, related to political figures, groups, events, and ideologies. Some of the topics are found consistently throughout the study period (Vladimir Putin, Western Europe, Ukrainian politics et al.), while others are linked to specific events (Boris Yeltsin, Estonia, Andrei Lugovoi).

Banner networks are strikingly fast in creating new banners in response to events, as was discussed in examples of the banners about the Sochi Olympics which appeared soon after the International Olympic Committee's decision. However, banner networks also appear by far less interested in removing the outdated banners. As a result, there are banners presenting Boris Yeltsin's death as breaking news one and a half months after the fact.

The correlation of different topics, as well as the use of visual and/or verbal means to transfer them, demands further investigation. In this project, the extent of analysis of this issue permits me to suggest that a correlation of topics in banners exists. On the one hand, this correlation may be the result of links between banner networks and similarities in their approaches to the presentation of contemporary events. On the other hand, topic correlation may be seriously influenced by the co-occurrence of particular events.

2.2.1.3 Semantic fields

The collected data on the presence of semantic fields in the political banner ads point to several important banner features. First of all, it appears that creators of banner ads are very rarely interested in presenting only the factual information to the viewers and not giving any type of evaluation of these facts. The non-evaluative "name of advertiser only" field is the least represented throughout the study period. Secondly, prominent events influence the extent to which certain semantic fields are present among banners. Thirdly, the two fields that have been most visible in the three data segments are "secret/intrigue/scandal" and "violence/conflict". The political information thus appears to be frequently transferred through two semantic fields that are prominent in the domain of popular entertainment.

2.2.2 CO-TEXT

From the collected data[3], it is possible to conjecture that the overall distribution of true and empty banners is very similar. It is thus equally probable for a banner to lead to the material it advertises and to a page that is unrelated to it.

The very low number of false banners in the corpus (8 out of 182 items analyzed, 4.4%) was unexpected. It is suggested that banner creators avoid employing a complex technique in which the banner provides an element of false expectation to attract clicking. Instead, the banner contains a message that is true only in relation to the destination text, but may be false in relation to reality. It is possible that the presence of this structure, in which two texts corroborate, influences the viewers by creating an aura of truthfulness around these texts.

It was surmised that the same idea may be behind the active participation of one of the analyzed websites (grani.ru) in the creation of its own ads. Such self-advertising through true banners would create an already triangular structure of three corroborating texts. However, closer analysis shows that the ads of this website are mostly classified as empty.

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[3] Due to technical limitations, the study could not include multi-banners into the analysis of the co-text aspect.

2.2.3 FORM

2.2.3.1 The technical elements

The technical characteristics of Russian political web banners in the corpus are visibly stable throughout the study period. The fact that the overwhelming majority of banners found are static relates to the emerging character of high-speed Internet capability in Russia. It is presumed that the websites may put a certain quota on the amount of time it takes a banner to load in order to ensure that the presence of a certain banner on a page does not make that page inaccessible for many viewers.

No connection is found between the shape of the banner and its content. The ruler-shaped banners are mostly multi-banners consisting of several individual rectangular or square banners put together. The wider spread of more compact banners may be linked to the technical constraints outlined above.

The overall consistency and only insignificant difference in the numbers of banners employing varying script and sentence structure suggest that these two factors are not viewed as highly important by banner creators. They may or may not choose to use upper-case letters and incomplete sentences to transfer their intended message.

2.2.3.2 Interplay of image and text

A deliberate link between the arrangement of the image and the text in the banner and banner content does not appear to be present. The same topic presented in different banners could have varying arrangement. The high number of components with the positioning of the image above the text is explained in part by the found typical arrangement of vertical multi-banners, in which such positioning is widely employed (apparently, due to concerns of space, which make it difficult to place the text to the sides of the image).

The found shift in the number of banners depicting no people or containing only text may be explained by the rise of the topic of Military Technology, which is largely transferred through images of weapons and ammunition. In general, the personification and visualization of politics, i.e. the constructed association of an event or idea with the image of a specific person, may be indicative of a general trend in political banner ads (see Section 2.4.4 below for details).

2.3 RESULTS OF THE RESTRICTED CORPUS

The phenomenon of fusion and interplay of various classes within one banner, as was mentioned earlier, presents an interesting topic for deeper analysis. For this reason, the political banners with class fusion and the multi-banners with merged political and non-political components are singled out of the corpus and examined separately.

2.3.1 Sample of items with class fusion and interplay

In total, this sample amounts to 62 individual banners and 24 multi-banners (comprising 71 components). The overall number of items analyzed is thus 133, more than half of the total number of political elements in the corpus. Items with class fusion (features of two or more classes present in the same banner) and interplay (banners belonging to different classes combined within a multi-banner) are found at all the seven origin websites, with the following distribution (Table 6):

	Number of occurrences				
Website	**May**	**June**	**July**	**Total in this sample**	**Total political in general corpus**
ej.ru	4	19	27	50	77
grani.ru	11	3	8	22	53
smi.ru	9	6	6	21	17
polit.ru	6	7	6	19	50
zadonbass.org	7	4	1	12	17
vremya.ru	4	2	1	7	28
vz.ru	0	1	1	2	2
TOTAL	41	42	50	133	244

Table 6: Number of cases of class juxtaposition through class fusion and interplay at different websites

Table 6 points out that ej.ru, the only website in the general corpus analysis to have overall prevalence of political banners over non-political, is also the most active in employing the technique of class fusion and interplay. Interestingly, there is a significant difference ($p=0.0002$) from May to June and even greater ($p=0$) from May to July in the number of such banner elements at this website. Zadonbass.org may have reduced the use of this technique during the same period ($p=0$ for difference between June and July, as well as May and July).

Only for smi.ru and vremya.ru the ratio of items with class fusion and interplay is significantly different from that of political banners in the general corpus ($p=0.0139$ and $p=0.0279$ accordingly). This suggests that the remaining five websites employ fusion and interplay techniques to the same extent as they publish political banners, which points to the fact that banner creators may resort to class juxtaposition whenever they turn to the presentation of politics.

In the sample, entertainment, crime, sports, and other classes are present alongside with political. No social or commercial elements are found. Overall, 46 elements are with only 1 class present in them (all of these being parts of multi-banners), 80 elements with 2 classes merged in them, and 5 elements with 3 classes together. The distribution by classes is as follows (Table 7):

	Number of occurrences		
	Alone	In combination with other classes	Total
Political	22	80	102
Entertainment	21	57	78
Crime	2	31	33
Sports	0	5	5
Other	1	1	2

Table 7: Presence of general banner classes in the sample of banners with class fusion and interplay

The high level of presence of the political class is pre-determined by the sample delineation. It should be noted that all the individual banners with class fusion containing political elements are classified as political within the general corpus analysis, in accordance with the procedure described in Section 5.1.1.1. However, as Table 7 suggests, the presence of the Entertainment class in the sample is also notable. The Political and Entertainment classes were almost at parity with respect to the number of elements in which they are alone, without fusion with other classes. Elements of the Crime class can also be seen employed, although to a lesser degree.

All the Sports elements are connected with the decision of the International Olympics Committee in favour of Sochi as the candidate city for the 2014 Olympics. The decision occurred at the end of the last data collection period and thus it is not possible to establish the full extent to which the Sports-Political fusion is employed. The particular case of Olympics is notably a fusion that is due to the current event and not the deliberate actions of web advertisers, although it can certainly be argued that the same event could be theoretically presented without resorting to class fusion.

The banner in Fig. 63 serves as an excellent example of the various class fusions:

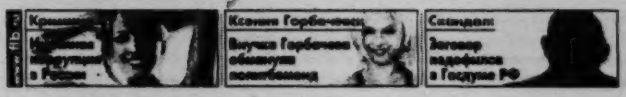


Figure 63: *www.flb.ru / Crime: Intimate corruption in Russia / Ksenia Gorbacheva: Gorbachev's granddaughter deceived the political beau monde / Scandal: Pedophile plot in the State Duma of the Russian Federation*

Depiction of unidentified individual, Ksenia Gorbacheva, and another unknown individual

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

In this multi-banner, each element is a blend of several classes. The first element, "Crime", incorporates elements of the Crime class ("crime", "corruption"), the Entertainment class ("intimate" – in contemporary Russian the word "intimnyi" developed a more explicitly sexual connotation than its English counterpart), and the Political class ("corruption in Russia"). The second element, "Ksenia Gorbacheva", is both Political ("Gorbachev", "political") and Entertainment ("granddaughter of Gorbachev", "beau monde"). The third and last element, "Scandal", can be classified simultaneously as part of the Political ("State Duma of the Russian Federation") and Crime ("pedophile plot") classes.

The banner in Fig. 64 presents a different case:

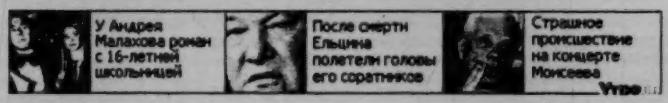


Figure 64: *Andrei Malakhov has an affair with a 16-year-old school student / After Yeltsin's death, the heads of his companions started falling / A horrifying accident at Moiseev's concert / Utro.ru*

Depiction of entertainer Andrei Malakhov with an unidentified companion, Boris Yeltsin, and singer Boris Moiseev

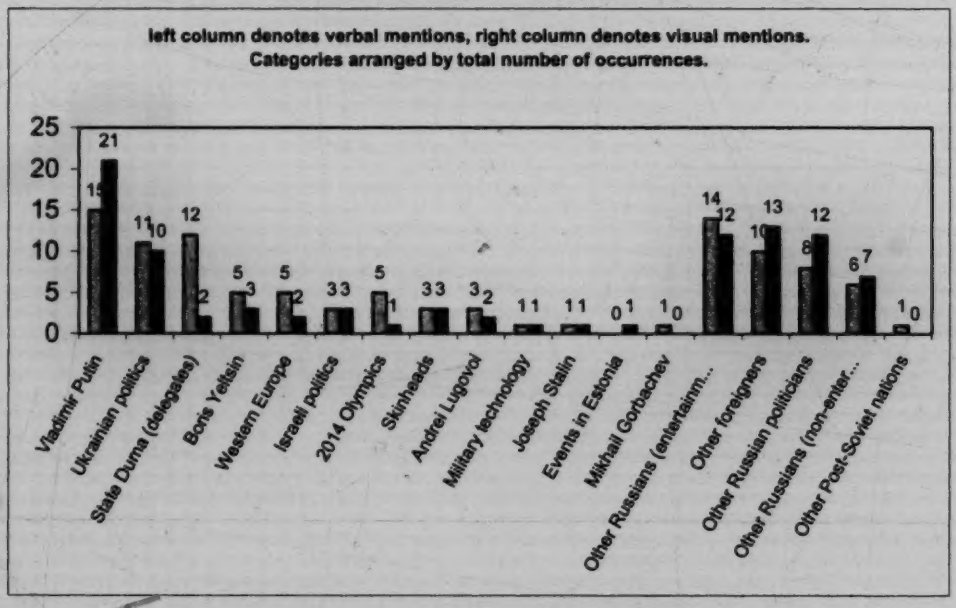
Date accessed June 1st, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

In Fig. 64, three very different components are put together in one multi-banner, forming an Entertainment-Political-Entertainment series. The political element related to the death of Boris Yeltsin is framed by two entertainment elements, one of which is concerned with the private life of an entertainer, and the other with an accident during a concert. The components are not related to each other, but appear as one unit on the web page. In this case, not fusion, but interplay of different classes is observed.

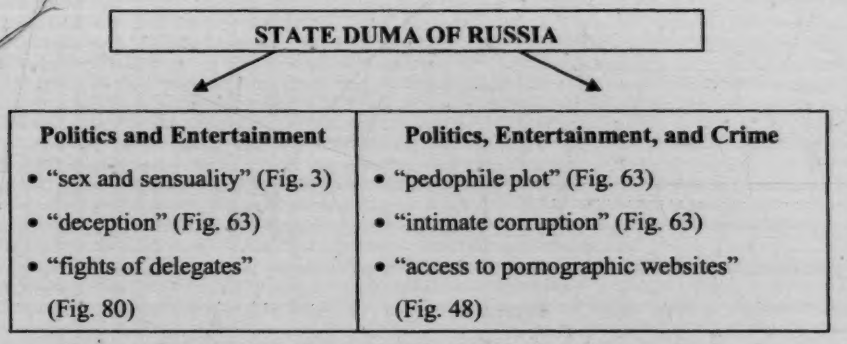
2.3.2 Complex presentation of political topics through banners

Analysis of the restricted corpus points to the complexity of presentation of political news and other items in banners. A number of topics were found in this sample (Graph 26):



Graph 26: Topics in the class fusion and interplay sample

In this sample, while in general the topical diffusion is similar to the one noted previously for the general corpus, some differences could be observed. The topics of Military Technology, Events in Estonia, and Mikhail Gorbachev are present less here than in the general corpus, and the topic of Dzhokhar Dudayev is not seen in this sample. The topic of "Other Russians (entertainment)" notably became highly visible (p-value of 0 for the difference between the number of items on this topic here and in the political banners in the general corpus). However, not the topics themselves are particularly worthy of note, but the correlation of political and non-political aspects. To take an example, the topic of the State Duma of Russia displays the following correlation set (Graph 27):

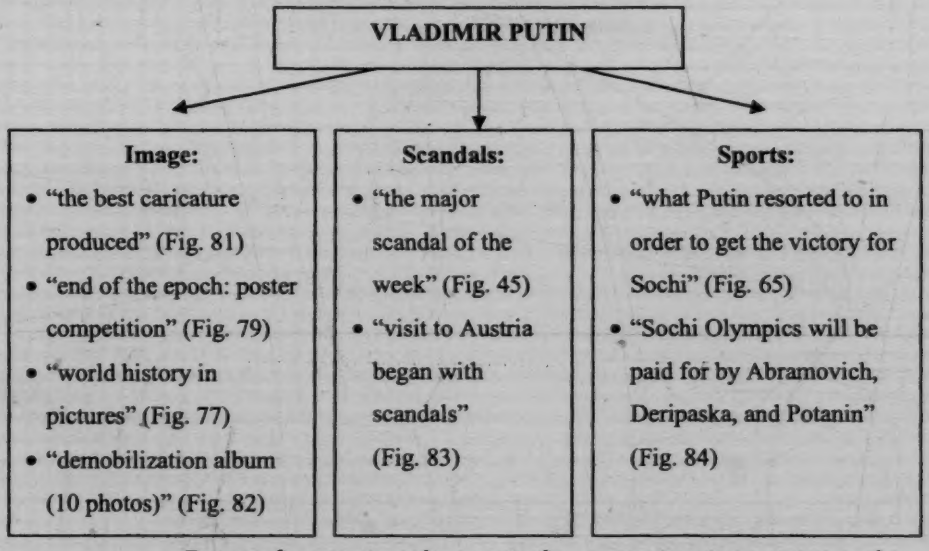

STATE DUMA OF RUSSIA
Politics and Entertainment
• "sex and sensuality" (Fig. 3)
• "deception" (Fig. 63)
• "fights of delegates" (Fig. 80)
Politics, Entertainment, and Crime
• "pedophile plot" (Fig. 63)
• "intimate corruption" (Fig. 63)
• "access to pornographic websites" (Fig. 48)

Extracts from pertinent banners in the corpus given in quotation marks.

Graph 27: "State Duma of Russia": correlation set of this topic

As Graph 27 illustrates, the topic of the State Duma is thus associated with non-political elements related to sex, violence, deception, and crime.

Other topics present in the sample are also conveyed through a mixture of features of various classes. Alongside with the purely political correlations, the topic of the Russian President Vladimir Putin has the following correlation set (Graph 28):


VLADIMIR PUTIN
Image:
• "the best caricature produced" (Fig. 81)
• "end of the epoch: poster competition" (Fig. 79)
• "world history in pictures" (Fig. 77)
• "demobilization album (10 photos)" (Fig. 82)
Scandals:
• "the major scandal of the week" (Fig. 45)
• "visit to Austria began with scandals" (Fig. 83)
Sports:
• "what Putin resorted to in order to get the victory for Sochi" (Fig. 65)
• "Sochi Olympics will be paid for by Abramovich, Deripaska, and Potanin" (Fig. 84)

Extracts from pertinent banners in the corpus given in quotation marks.

Graph 28: "Vladimir Putin": correlation set of this topic

As Graph 28 demonstrates, the webpage viewers are being prompted to follow the web banner to an article related to Vladimir Putin via different means. A number of banners exploit the popularity of Putin's image, advertising his photos, his caricatures, as well as posters and cartoons about him. Others use the entertainment headliner of "scandal" to attract

clicking. A number of banners can be classified as both Political and Sports, as they relate to Putin's role in the victory of Sochi in its bid to become an Olympic site, as in Fig. 65 below:

Figure 65: *Newsru.com / What Putin resorted to in order to get the victory for Sochi*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: July 7th, 2007

Origin: www.grani.ru

Fig. 65 above illustrates an aforementioned trend that was found in the presentation of the Sochi Olympics 2014 event: in only one banner discussing this event there was no depiction of Vladimir Putin. In this particular examples, the fact that Putin's eyes cannot be seen adds a tint of secrecy, discussed further in the following section.

Class fusion and interplay techniques similar to those displayed in Fig. 65 can be found for the other topics in the sample. The extent to which they are employed in the creation of political banners permits me to single out some details about how this fusion and interplay occurs, presented in the following section.

2.4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESTRICTED CORPUS

The analysis of the data presented in the previous section allows one to reveal the following characteristics of banner ads in the sample: the classes that do and do not take part in fusion and interplay with others, types of class fusion, peculiarities of politics shown through banners, polarity, exaggeration, and visualisation of politics in banners. In addition, the analysis permits a number of assumptions on the possible effect of these characteristics onto the creators and viewers of these ads.

2.4.1 Classes that do and do not take part in fusion and interplay

The absence of Social and Commercial elements in the sample may be indicative of two points:

a) these classes are not considered efficient in serving as attractors that lead to banners of other classes;

b) the messages transferred in these classes are regarded as worthy of an entirely separate unit, in order for them not to get confused with and obscured by the surrounding information.

The level of interplay of the Entertainment and Crime classes with the Political class found during corpus analysis points to an important characteristic of political web banners in that they frequently constitute a fusion of various classes. The high number of such cases in

the corpus (more than half the number of political elements in the entire corpus) suggests that the creators of political banner ads resort to such fusions to a significant extent. "Pure" cases of political banners also exist, as well as "pure" entertainment, crime, and sports banners. However, it is the revealed interplay that may lure the viewers that do not respond to "pure" ads, and thus the mixed elements demand a detailed review.

2.4.2 Types and features of class fusion

The most basic type of class fusion takes place when a person commonly associated with one class participates in an event that is part of another class. The example of the singer Pugacheva at Russian ex-president Yeltsin's funeral illustrates this type of fusion quite well (Fig. 22), as well as the banner in Fig. 65 above. In both cases, the main characters of the banners act in an unusual role presenting an event that is not directly connected to their main occupation (the profession of a popular singer is not directly linked to the concept of a funeral, while the office of the president is not primarily associated with sports).

Another fusion type occurs when the same person is at the same time connected with more than one general class, as in Fig. 66 and Fig. 67 below.

Figure 66: *Where and how the children of Sobchak, Fradkov, Patrushev, and Yeltsin are settled*

Depiction of entertainer Ksenia Sobchak

Date accessed: July 6th, 2007

Origin: http://www.vz.ru/politics/

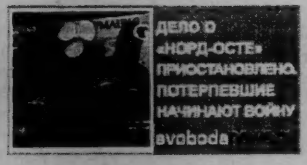


Figure 67: *The "Nord-Ost" case suspended. The victims are starting a war / svobodanews.ru*

Depiction of participants in the 2002 hostage crisis in Moscow

Date accessed: June 5th, 2007

Origin: http://www.vremya.ru/2007/95/5/179570.html

In Fig. 66, Ksenia Sobchak, a daughter of a formerly prominent politician, is herself a popular entertainer. However, it should be noted that even if the banner did not contain her picture, it would still have been a boundary case between politics and entertainment, due to the very topic of family lives of politicians discussed in it, as signalled by language ("pristroeny" ("settled") has a disapproving connotation). Fig. 67 deals with a major contemporary Russian event, the Moscow Dubrovka theatre hostage crisis of October, 2002. The crisis has been and still is highly politicised. Thus, the terrorists depicted in the banner

are not simply criminals, but also participants in a political event. In this particular case, the fusion of the Political and Crime classes is not produced artificially, i.e. the creators of the ad did not combine the two classes in this example.

A fusion of categories occurs when, for example, a politician is talked about from a standpoint that is more commonly used when discussing entertainers, i.e. when an unexpected, unusual opinion or idea is being expressed and is out of place in the given setting. Let us take an example presented in Fig. 68:

Figure 68: *"Time" / How Stalin charmed people. Miscellaneous about the leader.*

Depiction of Joseph Stalin

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

The figure of Joseph Stalin is rarely associated with a charming personality, yet the creators of this banner did turn to this issue in this particular way, attracting viewers through uniqueness. This fusion type borders very closely on the cases of discussion of private life and health of political figures, as in Fig. 69 and Fig. 70.

Figure 69: *Izvestia / "Yeltsin's feeling for things was simply fantastic" / How the President really lived*

Depiction of Boris Yeltsin

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.vz.ru

Figure 70: *Grani.ru / Bush in an embarrassing situation in Germany*.

Depiction of US President George W. Bush

Date accessed: July 5th, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/news/2007/07/05/medvedev.html

The banner in Fig. 69 advertises facts of Yeltsin's private life that have not been disclosed earlier. Yeltsin is thus viewed from the personal side instead of political. The banner in Fig. 70, mentioning "an embarrassing situation", leads to an article discussing US President's health problems, namely, food poisoning during his visit to the G8 meeting in Germany. This banner, which was published at the time of the meeting, may be indicative of special use of the class fusion. A web page visitor is given the idea that the news item advertised by the banner is political, i.e. concerned with something George W. Bush did or said during the G8

meeting that was relevant to this event and US foreign relations. However, it is only by clicking the banner that the viewer realizes that both the banner and the article to which it leads are connected with George W. Bush in a strictly non-political sense, with his physical health. In this particular example, the political character of the banner is underlined instead of its entertainment aspect, i.e. a piece of entertainment news is presented as political. A bi-directional process of inter-relation and mutual influence of the political and entertainment classes is thus observed.

2.4.3 Overview of politics shown through class fusion and interplay

The analysis of the political elements within their co-texts allows us to observe the general notion of politics as transferred through banners in the sample. To a certain extent, it is apparently not politics proper that interests banner creators, but the connections of politics with crime, sex, violence, murder, privacy, blackmail, corruption, and secrecy.

As was mentioned earlier, the topic of the State Duma of Russia appears to be frequently transferred in banner advertising through the prism of the issue of sex. Ukrainian politics is another topic approached in the same way. These two topics, together with several others, as well as immediate surroundings of the political banners, build up a link between politics and sex in the sample (cf. Graph 29 below) as illustrated by the following banners (Fig. 71, 72, and 73):

Figure 71: *New cartoon* [slang variant used in original] *about Yanukovich*

Depiction of Ukrainian prime minister Viktor Yanukovich

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.zadonbass.org

Figure 72: *Newsru.com / HAMAS militants captured pornographic discrediting materials from Fattah (Photos)*

Date accessed: July 4th, 2007

Origin:
http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/Regions/m.124309.html

Figure 73:

Lenta.Ru / Latest news

The USA have tested a pilot-less helicopter

Larry Flynt is buying up sex-scandals

Depiction of Larry Flynt

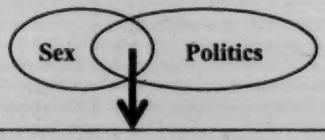
A drug dealer saved New York

Date accessed: June 4th, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/news/2007/06/04/mahatma.html

The banner presented in Fig. 71 depicts the Ukrainian Prime-Minister Yanukovich half-naked and leads to a sexually explicit cartoon about key players in Ukrainian politics. The use of slang "mul't" instead of the standard "mul'tfil'm" is also worthy of note. Both the visual and the textual aspects of the banner in Fig. 72 stress the sexual content of the article it leads to. In Fig. 73 we see two political elements surrounding an entertainment element dealing with "sex-scandals". It is suggested that such an arrangement of elements may influence the perception of the messages transferred by the two political elements of the multi-banner.

These banners, together with a number of others given earlier in the project, participate in the construction of the following model (Graph 29):



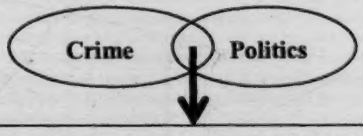
State Duma: "sex and sensuality" (Fig. 3), "pedophile plot" (Fig. 63), "pornography" (Fig. 48) et al.

Ukrainian Politics: "spicy diagnosis" (Fig. 34), "cartoon about Yanukovich" (Fig. 71) et al.

Middle East: "pornographic discrediting materials (photos)" (Fig. 72)

Graph 29: Link between politics and sex constructed in the sample

The present analysis also established a link between crime and politics as illustrated by Graph 30:



Murder: "the secret of Kushnarev's murder" (Fig. 24), "skinhead killed 37 people" (Fig. 32) et al.

Punishment: "Saddam Hussein's execution" (Fig. 23), "Eduard Ulman sentenced in absence" (Fig. 85) et al.

Corruption: "where and how the children of Sobchak… are settled" (Fig. 66), "Sochi Olympics will be paid for by…" (Fig. 84) et al.

Sex Crime: "pedophilia in the State Duma" (Fig. 63), "intimate corruption" (Fig. 63) et al.

Violence: "fights of delegates" (Fig. 80), "heads falling" (Fig. 64) et al.

Extracts from pertinent banners in the corpus given in quotation marks.

Graph 30: The link between crime and politics constructed in the sample of items with class fusion and interplay

Politics and politicians, aside from being corrupt, violent, deathly, and closely connected with sex and indecency, are shown to be surrounded by an air of secrecy, deceit, backstreet intrigues, and blackmail (Fig. 74):

Figure 74:

Strana.Ru

Urgent / Yushchenko and Yanukovich have reached an agreement

Depiction of Viktor Yuschenko with an unidentified individual

Urgent / Europe is blackmailing Russia

Urgent / Zavorotniuk's life is in danger"

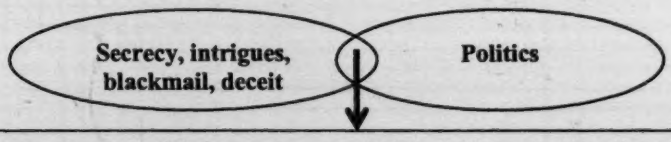
Depiction of actress Anastassia Zavorotniuk

Date accessed: May 4th, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru/politics

The banner in Fig. 74 contains two components connected with secrecy and blackmail. The top component, "Yushchenko and Yanukovich have reached an agreement", develops this coloring through the use of a photograph in which one of the participants in the discussion is shown from the back, as if hiding something, and through the polysemy of "dogovorilis'", which can be translated as both "reached an agreement" and "made a deal". The second component, found in the middle of the multi-banner, is much more explicit in its message through the employment of categorical "is blackmailing".

An overview of data participating in the construction of the link between politics with such spheres as secrecy and blackmail is presented in Graph 31:



Secrecy: "secret of Kushnarev's murder" (Fig. 24), "pedophile plot" (Fig. 63) et al.
Intrigues: "Peretz is a liar and intriguer" (Fig. 76), "what Putin resorted to…" (Fig. 65) et al.
Blackmail: "Europe is blackmailing Russia" (Fig. 74) et al.
Deceit: "deceived the political beau monde" (Fig. 63) et al.
Extracts from pertinent banners in the corpus given in quotation marks.

Graph 31: The constructed link between politics, secrecy, intrigues, blackmail, and deceit in the sample of items with class fusion and interplay

Politics is linked to a number of other spheres and concepts through banners, which in itself presents a rich ground for further study.

2.4.4 Entertainment features in the presentation of political news

Several political banners in the sample demonstrate a feature of exaggeration and polarity, borrowed from the field of entertainment. Such features could be seen in the third component in earlier Fig. 64 ("horrifying accident"), Fig. 69 ("just fantastic") and the following two banners (Fig. 75 and Fig. 76):

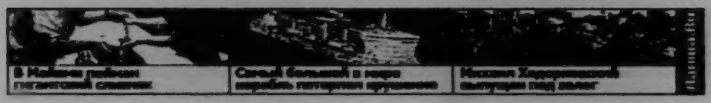


Figure 75: *A gigantic slug caught in Maiami / The largest ship in the world wrecked / Mikhail Khodorkovsky released on bail / Lapsha.Ru*

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: http://www.smi.ru/07/05/03/907688601.html

Figure 76:

Newsru.co.il

Mega- terrorist act was prevented at the New York JFK airport

Lieberman's entourage: "Peretz is a liar and intriguer"

Depiction of Israeli politicians Avigdor Lieberman and Amir Peretz

The husband of the richest Israeli woman was released from a prison"

Depiction of Shari and Ted Arison

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7126

As can be seen in Fig. 75 and 76 above, the exaggeration or radicalism in evaluation does not always take place in the political component itself. However, the surrounding components bearing these characteristics may influence the perception of the political component as well. Thus in Fig. 75, if we presume that the components of the multi-banner are read from left to write, as a simple text, the political item about Mikhail Khodorkovsky is viewed after the items about the "gigantic slug" and "the largest ship in the world". Fig. 76 starts and ends with exaggerated statements, which may change the extent to which Amir Peretz is seen to be "liar and intriguer", as this item is found in the middle of the multi-banner.

Another technique of fusion of politics and entertainment found is concerned with the visualization of politics. A number of banners in the sample refer to visual

representations of politicians and political events, including videos. This may be indicative of a trend in political web banner ads through which such ads are attached to non-political spheres of life (Fig. 77, 78, 79):

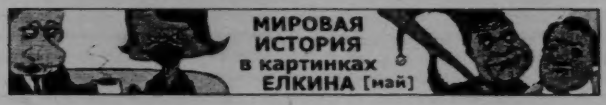


Figure 77: *World History in pictures by Ëlkin (May)*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin, Condoleezza Rice, Viktor Yanukovich, and Viktor Yushchenko

Date accessed: June 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.polit.ru

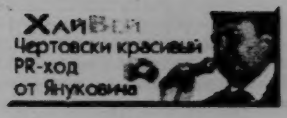


Figure 78: *HighWay / Bloody smooth PR-move from Yanukovich*

Depiction of Viktor Yanukovich

Date accessed: May 6th, 2007

Origin: www.zadonbass.org

Figure 79: *Grani.ru / The end of Putin's epoch: poster competition*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: July 2nd, 2007

Origin: http://www.polit.ru/news/2007/07/02/zahvat.html

The banners presented above are only a few in a large group in the corpus. Interestingly, while Fig. 77 and Fig. 79 present a "preview" of the visual material they are advertising, the banner in Fig. 78 only refers to a visual component in wording and the little icon of a photo camera in the middle of the banner. These banners participate in the construction of the model presented in Graph 32:

Videos: "Tymoshenko had her terrible revenge on the creators of the film "Julia"" (Fig. 86), "terrorists in white coats. Video" (Fig. 87), "fights of delegates (video)" (Fig. 80) et al.

Photos: "report from Yeltsin's funeral (24 photos)" (Fig. 22), demobilization album of Putin (10 photos)" (Fig. 82) et al.

Other: "end of Putin's epoch: poster competition" (Fig. 79), "the best caricature of Putin produced" (Fig. 81), "world history in pictures" (Fig. 77) et al.

Extracts from pertinent banners in the corpus given in quotation marks.

Graph 32: Visualization of politics in the sample of items with class fusion and interplay

The employment of exaggeration and polarity, together with visualization of politics, may not be the only aspects through which the presentation of politics is conducted as presentation of entertainment, which points to the need for further studies of this issue.

2.5 SUMMARY

As the analysis above demonstrates, it is possible to point out that the presentation of politics in Russian web banners appears to be frequently similar to the presentation of entertainment and other non-political information. The creators of political banner ads follow a stereotypical model of politics that is inherently closely tied with crime, sex, violence, lies, and money. While current political events and their participants are presented in this light, political banner ads become more visual, attain the features of exaggeration, and, most importantly, no longer act as political-only ads. The study suggests that the advertisers may employ these techniques in order to increase their viewership base and prompt clicking. Towards this end, they supposedly underline and emphasize the entertainment, criminal, sports and other non-political features in the political events and the people acting in these events.

A concluding hypothesis is put forward that the use of the outlined techniques of class fusion and interplay may have fundamental influence onto the opinions and behaviour of Internet viewers. The borderline between the political and the non-political may be gradually washed away in banners. On the one hand, it is conjectured that Internet page viewers grow accustomed to the pointed out representation of political events and figures, which may in the end modify their long-term expectations of political ads and politics as a whole. On the other hand, it is assumed that this mode of presenting political news and advocating certain ideas may be effective in catching the attention of the viewers that are not

interested in or distrustful of the direct presentation of political advertising. Together with other techniques that are not the subject of this study, such presentation of political news may lead to a surge in the employment of banner ads in the upcoming election campaigns (December 2007 Duma election and Spring 2008 Presidential election). This surge may, in the end, have certain impact onto the opinions of those Russians that form opinions relying on the information they find on the Internet.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS

This project aimed at including web banners into research on modern Russian political discourse. The research questions of this study were to reveal the discursive functions that banner ads have and the means through which they realize these functions.

A three-month data collection period was followed by the analysis of banners at three levels: content, form, and co-text. Within these levels of analysis, multiple banner features, including topics, semantic fields, shape, sentence completeness, and credibility, were disclosed. As a result of the preliminary analysis of the entire corpus, a sample of banners containing features of both political and non-political classes was singled out and studied further. The aim of this analysis was to reveal the extent to which non-political features are employed to transfer political messages and vice versa, i.e. the fusion and interplay of the field of politics with other fields as seen in the collected banners.

The analysis of data has led to a number of conclusions that are considered important for a more comprehensive approach to banner ads as elements of discourse. Class fusion and interplay was found to be a frequently used technique that may be efficient in attracting viewership. Banner creators were shown to present political news and information through and together with entertainment, crime, and sports. The rigidity of general classes of banners, in which each banner would belong to only one class, was demonstrated to exist only in theory and impossible to realize in practice. This adds further to the complexity of banner ads and points to the necessity of further studies of these elements of discourse, taking into account the growing influence of the Internet throughout the world.

The following features were analyzed: banner shape, the presence of animation in them, the employment of capitalized script and sentence completeness. These features have proved to be fairly consistent throughout the entire data collection period and also at all the studied websites. The found regularity in the distribution of banners by the various categories within these features may point to two opposite conclusions. On the one hand, these features may be irrelevant to studies interested in banner content and co-textuality, as they do not vary when the subject-matter or the semantic field present in the banner changes. On the other hand, these features may prove to be of relevance to such studies when a larger corpus collected within a greater time period and incorporating a wider range of websites is available.

A general model of typical Russian political web banners was constructed through the analysis carried out. These banners were found to relate to a variety of topics, as well as different semantic fields, frequently incorporate several topics and spanning beyond the limits of one field. The minimal presence of the neutral "name of advertiser only" field in the project's corpus suggests that even when the banner is not commercial and does not advertise

a product, it still carries a strong motivational component. Banners were found to be usually relatively small in size and static, which appears connected to the technical constraints of a relatively undeveloped national Internet space.

During this project, it was revealed that banners are not easily broken up into the three established categories of true, false, and empty. As was noted previously, the true banners may sometimes be "true" only in the meaning that the banner and the destination text correspond in their message. The "truthfulness" may not extend further and correspond to reality or the content of other texts. Although no such cases were noted during this study, it is also possible for false banners to be "false" only in relation to the destination text. The same banner may be "true" in relation to numerous other texts and reality. The empty banners in the corpus are not uniform. Some of them led to the correct website that did not have the advertised material anywhere on it. However, in a number of cases, although the viewer was not brought directly to the advertised material, it was possible to locate this material using an article search at the destination webpage. The credibility of banners and their relation to truth would need to be put under more detailed analysis.

Some critical comments on the methodology of this work are in order. Initially, multi-banners were not broken up into components for the analysis. Nevertheless, further into the study, it proved to be necessary to do so for accurate reflection of data. Therefore, it was possible to single out the components and analyze them in regards to shape, topics, semantic fields, and sentence completion. The data on the co-text aspect of these components was, however, unavailable, and multi-banners were not included into the analysis and discussion at the co-text level. This drawback in the data collection setup could be resolved using a more sophisticated database system to store data during the experiment, as well as a professional graphics editor to separate the components of multi-banners from each other. It is also advised that future investigations of banner ads take into consideration a period greater than three months to account for any seasonal patterns.

Some suggestions of banner aspects that could be studied in more detail would be the difference in sentence structure, complexity of grammar and vocabulary, presence of mistakes and errors, use of metaphors, similes, metonymy, pun, intertextual references among others in banners dealing with varying subject-matter, of different form, or distributed by competing banner networks. During this project, the same topics and ideas were seen transferred through different means by a number of sources. Further research would be able to reveal the techniques through which banner creators make their ads stand out among others and the common traits of banners throughout the national Internet segment.

As was noted above, the status of banner ads in relation to the Gricean maxim of quality presents a broad research topic. Such research would need to question issues of

credibility, falsity, and emptiness in relation to banner advertising. It is believed that thorough analysis of the aforementioned semi-truthfulness and semi-falsity will demand the integration of current trends in discourse studies, philosophy, and anthropology.

As was pointed out in the beginning of the study, banners present a multi-faceted phenomenon that ideally would need to be approached simultaneously at several levels, namely, text, co-text, context, and ultimately discourse. A variety of possible experiments could include longitudinal studies on a larger corpus, taking into account the full extent of co-texts and context of banners. This would make necessary detailed reviews of the technical development of banners, the links between websites and other electronic and non-electronic texts, and the perceptions and attitudes of website visitors. Furthermore, projects on banners could incorporate cross-cultural analyses of this phenomenon to account for any variations and similarities in the approaches employed by banner creators in different national and cultural environments.

It should be noted that while this study allowed to answer the second research question, it could not answer the first one. Thus, this study underlined how banners function to attract attention, a function that is inherent to their nature of advertising. However, further differentiation of web banner functions can only be attempted through a large-scale study of the perceptions and attitudes of Internet users as well as the creators of Internet advertising, supplemented with the collection and analysis of actual data.

The fusion and interplay of politics and other fields, such as entertainment and crime, demands further study on a wider scope of data. The links between other fields need to be established. The question of what topics tend to be transferred through class fusion and what topics are usually seen only in banners of a certain class needs to be investigated.

In the field of Russian discourse analysis, the upcoming parliamentary and presidential electoral campaigns present a rich source of valuable data. As these elections promise to be the first in Russian political history in which the Internet would be considered seriously by the major forces as a campaigning medium, close attention would need to be paid to the websites of Russian political parties, groups, and candidates. It is supposed that the disclosed statistical data showing a high number of potential voters that can be attracted and won over through apt use of the Internet has been brought to the attention of key political decision-makers in Russia. The upcoming months may see rapid development of the political and other sectors of the Russian Internet space.

Web banners need to be fully integrated into contemporary studies on manipulation and source confusion. The interesting character of banner ads, in which they may potentially act as pure advertising, as quite neutral information-carriers, and as a mixture of the two, makes them an interesting topic of study. It is suggested that banner makers may exploit this

complex nature of banner ads to manipulate in a covert manner. Election period may see vivid examples of this put into practice.

It should also be stated that this study has taken the review of banner ads only a step further, recognizing their intrinsically discursive nature and appealing to the need for further analysis of a multitude of aspects of web banners that have, until now, been largely neglected. It is hoped that other studies of this phenomenon will contribute to the construction of a critical approach to banner ads and their full inclusion into current research in the discourse of advertising, politics, entertainment, and commerce.

Banner ads present a largely interdisciplinary topic of research, bringing together such diverse fields as discourse analysis, computer science, marketing, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and other fields. Joint effort on the part of specialists in these areas of knowledge would allow us to establish the influence banners have on the formation of opinions, dialogues of cultures and ideologies.

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APPENDIX A: THE WEBSITES

Website	Address Year founded	Main sections	Owners
Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal (Daily Journal)	www.ej.ru n/a	In the Kremlin, in the government, in the chambers, party in power, with epaulets, in opposition, in business, far from Moscow, around Russia, among the people	Unknown
Grani.Ru (The Edges)	www.grani.ru 2000	Opinions, politics, society, protest actions, accidents, science, economics, culture, essays, photo galleries, dossier, poster competition	"Flavus" company, Boris Berezovsky
SMI.Ru (Mass Media)	www.smi.ru 1999	Around news, inside media, press-centre of smi.ru, headlines of the day, publications, text of the day, archive	Unknown
Polit.Ru	www.polit.ru 1998	Culture, science, country, world, Ukraine, economy, sports, news, event, analysis, author, open seminars, public lectures, research, documents, cove, topics, monitor, discussion	"Polit.Ru" company
KID – Yugo-vostochnaia Liga (KID – South-Eastern League)	zadonbass.org ("for Donbass") 2001	Important, politics, economics, events, society, story of success, crime, emergency, sports, social meter, [Ukrainian President] Viktor Andreevich [Yushchenko], abroad	Unknown
Vremia Novostei (Time for News)	www.vremya.ru 2000	The whole issue, front page, politics and economics, society, accidents, the Abroad, TV, business and finances, culture, sports, among other things	"Vremya" Publishers
Delovaia Gazeta "Vzgliad" (Business Newspaper "Opinion")	www.vz.ru 2005	Press round-up, economics, politics, society, sports, culture	Konstantin Rykov Publishing House

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE OF MAJOR POLITICAL EVENTS REFLECTED IN THE ANALYZED CORPUS

April 21, 2007 – 11th anniversary of the death of Dzhokhar Dudayev, first President of Chechnya.

April 23, 2007 – Boris Yeltsin died.

April 25, 2007 – Boris Yeltsin's funeral.

April 26, 2007 – Vladimir Putin announced that Russia may withdraw from the CFE treaty in response to US plans of installing missile defense units in Poland.

April – May, 2007 – Crisis in relations between Russia and Estonia due to the Estonian government's decision to relocate the Soviet monument dedicated to the liberation of Tallinn by the Red Army in the Second World War. Russian minority in Estonia organized protest rallies. The crisis peaked with mass riots and violence during the last week of April.

May – June, 2007 – British Public Prosecutor's office demanded the extradition of Andrei Lugovoi from Russia. Lugovoi became the chief suspect in the murder of Litvinenko in London. Russia refused to extradite Lugovoi to Britain.

May 24, 2007 – Mikhail Gorbachev's radio interview in which he predicts "coming distemper" in Russia.

May 31, 2007 – Press-conference of Andrei Lugovoi at which he accused Boris Beresovsky and Alexander Litvinenko of being MI6 agents.

June 7, 2007 – Vladimir Putin proposed joint use of a radar station in Azerbaijan as an alternative to US plans for installing missile defense units in Poland.

June 15, 2007 – US administration commented that Putin's proposals would not change the plans for missile defense units in Eastern Europe.

July 1, 2007 – George W. Bush confirmed US plans to build missile defense units in Poland.

July 4, 2007 – Session of the International Olympics Committee in Guatemala elects Sochi, Russia as the capital of the 2014 Winter Olympics.

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL DATA NOT INCLUDED IN MAIN BODY OF THESIS

Figure 80: *Skandaly.ru / Fights of delegates (Video)*

Depiction of unknown individuals

Date accessed: May 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.polit.ru

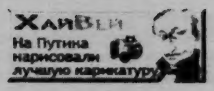

Figure 81: *HighWay / The best caricature of Putin produced*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: June 3rd, 2007

Origin: www.zadonbass.org

Figure 82: *Demobilization album of Vladimir Putin (10 photos) / Expert*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: July 1st, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7204

Figure 83: *Newsru.com / Putin's visit to Austria started with scandals*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin and Liudmila Putina

Date accessed: June 2nd, 2007

Origin: www.vremya.ru

Figure 84: *The Sochi Olympics will be paid for by Abramovich, Deripaska, and Potanin / newru.co.il*

Depiction of Vladimir Putin

Date accessed: July 7th, 2007

Origin: http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7224

Figure 85: *Radio Liberty*

Un-motherly love of Marlene Dietrich

Depiction of actress Marlene Dietrich

Eduard Ulman sentenced in absence

Depiction of convicted Russian officer Eduard Ulman

CIS offices as the place of exile for unnecessary politicians

Depiction of Vladimir Putin and former Central Election Committee Chairman Alexander Veshnyakov

svoboda.news.ru

Figure 86: *Tymoshenko had her terrible revenge on the creators of the film "Julia"*

Depiction of Tymoshenko and two unknown individuals

Date accessed: July 5th, 2007

Origin: www.zadonbass.org

Figure 87:

Sochi is the Olympic capital of 2014!

vesti.ru

Terrorists in white coats. Video

vesti.ru

Valdish Pelsh taken to hospital

Depiction of entertainer Valdis Pelsh

vesti.ru

Vesti

Date accessed: July 5th, 2007

Origin: www.smi.ru